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THE LIFE OF PETER THE GREAT

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THE AMAZING LIFE OF JOHN LAW

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Peter the Great

PETER
THE GREAT

Written by Georges Oudard in French
Under the title of Pierre Le Grand

TRANSLATED BY F. M. ATKINSON

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PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

MUSCOVY in the days with which we are dealing is assuredly the greatest of all the states in Europe. It spreads out in vastness from the Western world to the Eastern, from Livonia, Poland and Sweden away to the river Obi; the frozen sea lips it on the north, and on the south it is fenced in by the Tartars of the Crimea and Perekop, who barely two centuries before still held it under their yoke.

And in the very centre and heart of Great Russia, on the banks of the Moskva river, stands the capital and dwelling-place of the sovereign who is called Czar by his subjects but who is still given the title of Grand Duke in the civilized courts that know little of the changes going on among these barbarians.

From whatever side you approach, before you reach Moscow, you must needs go through woods so thick that they never see the sun. The great coaches, for all that they are drawn by eight or ten horses, continually sink into the sempiternal mud and mire. The roads are good only in winter. For then the ice that covers the whole earth makes them firm and solid, and men journey almost in comfort by means of sledges like travelling rooms fitted with doors, windows, a bed, and heavily encumbered with provisions that are made necessary for want of shelter along the way. For there is no posting establishment in Muscovy, nor even inns except in the principal towns. On the highroads nothing can be bought but eggs and milk in the foul-smelling, smoke-filled isbas met with at long intervals.

Nothing can be imagined more poverty-stricken than the peasants of this country, tall, powerful, hardened to fatigue, but idle and knavish. They work only under the threat of the lash. They are treated like the brute beasts they most resemble. Most of them are slaves. They belong to the Czar, to the *knès,* the boyars, the nobles, the churches and the monasteries. This state

of serfdom sits lightly on them. Those who are freed set so little store by their freedom that they presently sell themselves and their families into slavery again. When they are too dissatisfied with their master, the most thieving of them run away to desert places and form bands of brigands, and the bravest go off to the steppes and join the independent Cossacks whose first republics go back to the days when the Lithuanians and the Tartars ruled in the land.

This disgusting and perverted populace, living in axe-built wooden houses where father, mother, children, men-servants and women-servants all live hugger-mugger on top of the same stove with never a notion of the commonest laws of decency, are all clad alike in garments of coarse linen or rough woollens, and, in winter, a sheepskin coming down below their knees. Their shoes are made of bark knotted and plaited with no little skill, and on their heads they wear caps of white felt, lined with sheepskin in winter. All Muscovites without exception wear caps instead of hats. Even the *knès*, who are the princes, and the boyars or great lords. In the cities the latter have velvet caps, and for ceremonial occasions, sable or black fox, half an ell in height.

Travellers never fail to doff their headgear as soon as they see, at the end of the road cut through the forest in a dead straight line, the spires of the capital with their crosses standing on the concave rim of a half-moon, this by decree of Ivan the Terrible, who desired in this way to mark in the sky itself the triumph of the cross over the crescent. It is hard, without seeing it, to imagine the fine effect made in the midst of an incredible intricacy of buildings, red and green and white, by those two thousand points or domes covered with tin or more often with copper gleaming in the sun like gold.

Looked at from a distance Moscow seems to be a city of un-

common grandeur and extraordinary magnificence. But the illusion disappears directly you have crossed the river on a clumsy raft fastened to both banks, which is called the *living bridge* because it moves under the weight of a carriage. If from outside, in a word, Moscow seems to be Jerusalem, it is nothing but Bethlehem from within.

The capital, hemmed about by villages and scattered suburbs, begins with the *Zemlianoygorod* or city of Earth, which is surrounded by an earthen wall held up by planks and balks of pine. This quarter, where the lower classes live, encloses another that takes its name of *Biellygorod* or white city from the white wall around it. There are the homes of the boyars and the wealthy traders, and the only decent inn, which is kept by a Frenchman who offers travellers rooms spacious but without beds or bedding, for the custom is to bring them with you.

Though some of these houses are made of brick, the majority are wood. In front of those belonging to the boyars stand a certain number of thatched huts that serve to shelter their servants and to keep the produce sent from their estates. In the courtyard there is always a chapel and very often a separate building for feasts and for visitors. The richest folk make it a practice to fit their houses with tin shutters to protect the interior against sparks flying from the fires that are frequent in Moscow through the carelessness of the inhabitants. The loss of one of these shacks is not at all a serious matter. They are easily replaced. You can buy ready-made ones in the market that take to pieces and can be put up again in four and twenty hours, just like a cupboard from the carpenter's.

Every house, which includes a garden and kitchen-garden, is shut off with irregular hedges, which makes the whole quarter look just like an enormous village. The streets are in keeping with the rest. They are wide but so foul that it would be

impossible to extricate oneself from the mire without those platforms made of tree trunks joined together that serve for crossing in bad weather. Most luckily there is no lack of hackney drivers. Perhaps there is not another town in the world with so many cabs — which here are wretched little one-horse sleighs driven by a peasant perched at the back.

But what strikes a foreigner most of all is the host of beggars met at every turn and the inconceivable number of drunkards strewing Mother Earth round about the wine-shops. The Grand Duke profits by this universal vice inasmuch as nothing may be consumed but the beer, the liqueurs, the vodka that come from his own cellars. He sells also salt, wheat, iron and tar, trades in caviare, and retails in the market the priceless furs that are laid at his feet as tribute.

These people love strong drink to such a degree that they would rather die than forego it. The boyars' servants, who get no wages, being serfs or sons of serfs, do not hesitate to rob and even to murder to lay hands on the wherewithal to get drunk. You can see them coming away from the wine-shops, stripped of their coats, and then going back to drink more and leaving their shirt and boots behind. The state they are left in does not in the least offend the passers-by, who display to one another the most intimate parts of their person with no sense of shame whatever. At the door of the public steam baths, as common here as in Turkey or Persia, for the Muscovites cherish the superstition that outer washings cleanse them of their sins, you find every day men and women entirely naked, occupied in arousing their passions with lascivious talk. These very people, who abuse one another like fishwives over nothing at all, and exchange with their own children talk that the lowest prostitutes elsewhere would blush to repeat, in their profound barbarism none the less look upon themselves as the most pious

folk on earth. They visit the churches from dawn to dark, and adorn the walls of their houses with icons that the painters, in obedience to the Patriarch's prohibition against trafficking in them, do not sell, but barter for money in *God's Fair*. The pictures they exhibit there are crudely imitated from those of the Greeks, and are very ugly. When you ask why this is so, they reply that Our Lord is without pride. This strange fair is not far from the river and the principal marketplace or bazaar in the *Kitaigorod* in the heart of the city, *Kitai* in Tartar meaning " middle." Here all the streets, each of which is given up to a single trade, are full of shops. To and fro among the crowd, for the delectation of the shoppers, move tamers of bears, tricksters with dice, puppet showmen who cover their heads with a rug and represent indecent little plays. Loafers and serfs throng round them or guy the shopmen, who have rings stowed away in their mouths and put out for sale anything and everything but their turquoises and rubies. The crowd is especially thick by the cathedral of Saint Basil, erected by Ivan the Terrible to commemorate the taking of Kazan, on the Red Square that separates the Kitaigorod from the Kremlin fortified with three brick walls, a good moat and a formidable array of guns. This is the handsomest part of the city, with its twenty streets lined with monuments almost all of which are stone, excessively bedaubed with paint, magnificent of aspect, and bizarre in shape, recalling Byzantium, India and Italy all at once, and its ninety churches among which the most famous are the Cathedral of the Assumption, which has a robe of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Cathedral of Saint Michael the Archangel in which the sovereigns are buried, and the Cathedral of the Annunciation, the priests of which have the privilege of being the Czar's confessors.

The Palace is just behind the Castle, and with it the house of

the Patriarch. Before it is an opulent building which under the late Czar Alexis was used for theatrical entertainments, unknown in the empire before his day. All approaches to it are guarded by one of the nineteen *Streltsy* regiments stationed at Moscow. These soldiers, organized like the janissaries of Constantinople, and the only infantry equipped with firearms, proudly wear sky-blue, or green, or cherry-coloured caftans embroidered with gold, yellow boots turned back at the tops, and velvet caps trimmed with fur.

On this day — the 27th of April of the year 7190 in their calendar, and 1682 in ours — at every moment there stopped at the Palace low carriages badly painted, with rusty gratings instead of windows, from which alighted fat individuals with blue eyes, generally short of thigh, proud of their great beards and their big paunches, before whom a numerous retinue of servants bowed to the earth.

Though these were all boyars, high officers of the Crown, councellors sitting in the Duna and officials of the Court, they were far from splendid in their attire.

Only at festivals or to receive ambassadors do they load their shoulders with ribbons and put on brocade tunics covered with huge pearls borrowed from the wardrobe of their master, from whom they filch bottles at the same time. On other days they are satisfied with putting on two or three ample vests of green, brown, violet or vermilion woollen stuff, without a belt, and over these a long black caftan with long sleeves, trimmed with sable or fox fur, showing the shirt collar buttoned at the side. Their wide trousers are tucked into high boots of Russian leather or Levant morocco. In this array they look like Turks.

Never since the death of Alexis had so many grandees gathered on the steps and in the antechamber of the Palace. At the

news of a grave illness of the Czar Feodor, a number of boyards had come back to Moscow from the provinces, intent on choosing a desirable successor to the sovereign they knew to be doomed. This weak young man of twenty-two, at that moment ending his life, was leaving no direct heir behind him. To which of his two brothers, born of different mothers, ought the throne to fall? Past any doubt to the son of the Miloslavsky woman by right of primogeniture, said the partisans of the eldest born. But the majority of the boyars, arguing from the other's ill-health, inclined towards Peter, the son of the Narishkin woman. So there were nothing but excited low confabulations in every corner, for the Muscovites are as cunning in discussion as they are obstinate and contradictory. The opponents eyed one another at a distance, dissembling their mutual hatred under grimaces that were shaped like smiles.

Round the shaking head and white beard of the old Odoievsky — descended from Saint Michael in the twelfth degree and from Saint Vladimir in the eighth — was an intent group all open-eared: Yury Alexievitch Dolgoruky, whose paralytic father had stayed at home, the Romodanovskys, illustrious for centuries, Prince Kurakin attentive and headstrong, Boris Galitzin redolent of foreign wine among those heavy breaths reeking onions and alcohol, and the Urossovs and the Tcherkaskys and the Troekurovs, and Repnin who has Saint Michael of Tchernigov for ancestor, and young Sheremetev impatient to be made a boyard.

A tall man with well-lined belly, whose sly, stupid face reflected nothing beyond his self-satisfaction at mere existence, was talking some way off from this compact group with two high officers of the opposing party, Pushkin and Sakovnin. This was Prince Hovansky. As he kept stroking with a fatuous hand his close-cropped cranium, the sign and seal here of greatness,

someone remarked that he would doubtless soon be constrained to let his hair grow, as nobles must do who are out of favour at court.

By way of distraction several of them are engaged in light talk of a characteristic kind, boasting of crimes that in other countries would be punished at the stake. They dare to pride themselves on being addicted to all kinds of abnormalities and even unnatural sins not only with men but also with animals. Their conversation is nothing but low stories, coarse speech and stupidities accompanied by obscene gestures. That does not prevent them from believing themselves the pink of politeness and considering themselves the true heirs of the ancient Greeks. Anyhow it is certainly not through the arts and sciences that they are linked, since most of them hardly know their alphabet. Their ignorance is matched only by their vanity. Since they know nothing of other realms they set the power of their Czar above the might and majesty of all kings and emperors on earth. Foreigners to them are barbarians, and as their crass brutish ignorance extends to matters of religion, they treat members of the Church of Rome as pagans, and tolerate them no more than they do Jews. From the way they talk they received their faith from Saint Andrew himself, who setting out from Greece on a millstone, for want of a ship, crossed the sea and sailed up the Volga in this fashion as far as Novgorod.

These nobles are so far from noble that they do not mind being flogged by the Czar just as they flog their serfs. " Gifts heal blows," they say.

And now everybody was growing heated and talking loudly in the antechamber of the Palace, and already some of them, under the pretext of coming to common terms, were fetching one another kicks, when there came out of a room close at hand a lord whom all eyes turned to follow mistrustfully. He

seemed some fifty years of age, and like the rest he was robust and fat with a big beard and eyes that were wicked like theirs but betrayed superior intelligence. He was going with measured step and slow to the doorway to meet an individual whose costume was a surprise among those heavy bundling robes. The newcomer wore a coat of the Dutch fashion, knee breeches, silk stockings and shoes. In the midst of those shaven heads his peruke looked even more voluminous than it was. This was one of the Czar's physicians, a foreigner like everybody else in this place who practised a science, an art or even a handicraft. He bowed right and left striking the ground with his forehead. The bystanders eyed him full of apprehensions, drawing in their stomachs so as not to run the risk of being soiled by touching him. The Muscovites, who have no notion of anything—do they not believe that no man could foretell the revolutions of the moon and eclipses without trafficking with the devil?—look upon physicians as equivalent to sorcerers.

Mute and lowering, the boyars watched Doctor Gutmensch, still accompanied by Ivan Miloslavsky, the Czar Feodor's uncle, and brother to Alexis' first wife, ascend a long winding stair, the steps, the walls and the ceiling of which were completely covered with Flanders and Persian tapestries. At intervals, under the lamps that shed a yellowy light, stood guards clad in white damask with gold chains crossed on their stomach and a silver axe on their shoulder. Their lynx-fur caps were shaped like a sugar-loaf, and as high.

When they came to the top landing, the boyar and the foreigner went through an apartment vaulted with stone magnificently painted in ochre, red, and blue, and lit up with wax candles. An inlaid armchair was placed in a corner near the window, and benches disguised under silken stuffs stood against the walls. The two men next entered a kind of corridor

that brought them to a door guarded by stokers. Miloslavsky had it opened and preceded the physician into the Czar's bed-chamber.

The room breathed the odours of a heavy perfume whose vapour was still exhaling from silver balls and pomanders constantly passed through the fire and placed on stands, on richly decorated cupboards, on the priceless lids of great coffers. In one corner might be seen the ebony crutch that helped the monarch to walk when he was well. A painting of the Mother of God with thin pierced gold plates had been hung opposite the bed, the silken sheets of which were hidden under a sable-skin coverlet adorned with pearls. In the midst of a pile of satin cushions lay the wasted, short-bearded face of Feodor, who now almost looked like the Christ of the icons. His lips already violet-hued rejected the cup his sister Sophia was trying to make him drink from. To give the physician an opportunity of examining the sick man the Czarevna moved away without noticing — either immodest or preoccupied — that she had forgotten to drop the *fata* over her hairy face heavily loaded in the fashion of the country with ceruse and vermilion.

This girl of three and twenty looks forty at the least. Her body, easy in camisoles and a looser hongreline — for in Muscovy the women dress like the men almost to the caftan — is monstrously fat and her head as big as a bushel. Nature formed her exactly to the ideal of beauty set out in the manuscript manuals the old women sell in the *térems*. She weighs more than five poods; she has a low forehead, narrow eyes with painted whites to them and a large foot. But in spite of her hypertrophied body, the mind that animates it is both quick and subtle.

Taking no more notice of the sick man, on whom she turned her back, the Czarevna was trying to catch the words Miloslav-

sky was murmuring into the ear of a handsome man, obviously very intelligent, whom she wrapped round with a long look half-ambitious and half-voluptuous.

This Prince Basil Galitzin, of the Jagellon family, is the cleverest, the most polished, the most accomplished among all the nobles of Muscovy. He is one of the four men in the whole nation who can speak Latin, and the only one who never drinks brandy; he knows Greek and German to boot, likes first-rate conversation and enjoys the society of foreigners. He loves France and worships Louis XIV, whose portrait he makes his little boy wear in a locket shaped like a Maltese Cross. He despises the ignorance of the grandees, who hate him ever since he urged the Czar Feodor to suppress the right of precedence that permitted a noble to refuse to serve under another whose father was lower in rank than his own ancestors. Though still young, only thirty-seven, he has taken the measure of the barbarism of the country, and his most ardent wish would be to see the suave manners of the West introduced into it.

At this moment he was listening to Miloslavsky with a thoughtful air through which peeped a touch of disdain for him. But for the furtive winks and signs the Czarevna sent him from a distance he might perhaps have allowed his impatience to master him.

The physician had asked that his colleague Doctor Daniel von Gaden, who was with the prospective widow, should be sent for. The shaking of his head foretold that the end was at hand. At once Sophia's face changed and she began to moan and plain extravagantly. Galitzin had gone up to the bedside and was bending respectfully over his dying master. The Czar's uncle had already hurried out of the room. He was one of those who do not, when a monarch dies, waste any of their time in keeping vigil by his corpse.

Directly he got home Miloslavsky called three slaves, and whip in hand ordered them to go at once and find his nephew Alexander and his cousins Peter and Ivan Tolstoy.

With clenched fists he walked up and down as he waited, from one end to the other of the apartment hung with very ugly Flanders leather.

If his enemies were reckoning on overthrowing him by the help of circumstances, they were grossly deceiving themselves. No one would ever send him into exile again. Old age was coming on him; he was minded to spend at Court the days God would deign to grant him still. He turned to the red corner and bowed before the icon. Even if it meant drowning all the Narishkins in their own blood, his party, he was determined, should triumph.

Why was he suddenly recalling to memory that night thirty years ago, when the boyar Marrosov had come to his father's house, pale and stricken. "Everything has gone wrong" he cried.

Four months earlier Alexis son of Michael, the first of the Romanovs, had ascended the throne. He was sixteen, and plans to get him married were strongly pressed forward. Throughout the whole empire it was publicly proclaimed to the sound of the trumpet that His Majesty wished to take a wife to himself. Whosoever, be he noble or trader or serf, had a beautiful and healthy daughter, was thus informed that he could send her to Moscow, to be presented after medical examination for the monarch's choice. It was usual for the Czars to wed one of their own subjects, for the princes of the western world refused to form any alliance with them.

Since it was the rule likewise that the new queen should bring her family into the Palace, there to seize upon the best places, Marrosov, that he might not lose his master's confidence,

had formed the plan of placing in the imperial bed a trusty person, Maria Miloslavsky, whose sister was his lover. An office at Court was earmarked for their brother Ivan. But this plan had just been shipwrecked. Alexis had preferred an unknown girl of still less illustrious birth. Many a man would have despaired. But the favourite was not of such a flabby breed. He gave a huge bribe to the hairdresser whose task it was to attend to the bride on her wedding day, and this fellow pulled her tresses so hard that the poor victim fainted. Accused of the taint of epilepsy she had been exiled on the spot, and Maria taken to the Cathedral in her place. Before long Marrosov married the Czar's sister-in-law, and Ivan entered on the road to fortune. When his protector had fallen, thanks to him in some degree, he had taken his place with little trouble. And for many years his power went on growing.

Even the death of the Czarina had not checked his progress in any way. As she had left behind her seven children, two of whom were sons, Feodor and Ivan, his ambition could envisage the future without apprehension. Misfortune came upon him from another side altogether, with a rival who loomed up threateningly — Artamon Matveiev.

As he thought of this man his hatred rose like a wave. The knave managed to refrain from open thieving but flaunted abominable vices. A Scotswoman bore his name; he wallowed in the perverting company of foreigners; he imitated their horrible ways, keeping in his house books written in barbarous tongues, apparatus for experiments in physics and others not less outlandish, which he played with mysteriously in the depths of an alchemist's den. How had the Czar Alexis, whom he, Ivan Mihailovitch had known wise, that is to say endowed with scanty learning, and reverence towards religion — used he not

to rise during the night to chant the praises of God lying on the ground? — how had he dared to place in such hands the command of the *Streltsy* and the charge of the office of Ambassadors.

The prince was too gentle by nature. A sovereign whose wrath never goes further than fisticuffs and kicks is fatally prone to every possible weakness.

One day — accursed be the day that gave birth to so many woes — Alexis invited himself to dine with Matveiev, charmed by the immaculateness of the well-appointed table, for the Scotswoman's husband, bent on doing nothing like his neighbours, insisted on having his pewter polished and the black that everywhere else films silver vessels removed from his. Not a single good Muscovite custom was observed in that house. Thus the traitor did not shut up his wife in the *térem* where all proper wives remain occupied in weaving and embroidery, sufficiently entertained — outside conjugal blows, the songs of the servant-maids, the grimaces of buffoons of their own sex — by swings in summer and sliding on the ice in winter. Matveiev's wife never came into the dining-hall to offer a cup of wine to the guests and allow each of them to kiss her on the mouth after it. But she took her shameless seat at table in the midst of the men.

A beautiful girl kept her company at dinner on this occasion. "Her name is Natalia and she belongs to Cyril Yarishkin who lives in the country. He has entrusted her to me to see to her education," said Matveiev. "I will look for a husband for her," decided the Czar. After four days he declared he had found a highly desirable one, adding that this was himself. The cunning sorcerer pretended to be astonished and threw himself at his master's feet, begging him to give the girl up that he himself might be spared the wrath of his enemies. Alexis in the end

consented to get together first of all sixty young women at the Palace, to make it appear that his choice was not premeditated.

The marriage took place on September 14, 7178.[1] Fury gnawing at his entrails, Ivan Mikhailovitch saw the swarm of Yarishkins, father and brothers, make their way into the Court, greedy for place and plunder.

Cyril, who yesterday ploughed his own fields, was presented with 90,000 peasants, was made a boyar, a judge, president of the board of the great palace. In his excess of pride he changed his name to Narishkin, as his own, which certainly was more suitable, lent itself to a low *double entendre*.

The birth of an heir, eighteen months later, brought all this rascally crew new offices and fresh presents. On May 30, 7180, Natalia was brought to bed with the utmost danger — alas! Heaven did not deign to snatch her away from earth — of a son who was given the name of Peter.

Miloslavsky had not heard the great bells of the Kremlin ring out on this occasion, nor had he been present at the solemn baptism in the convent at Tchudovs. His enemies had already had him exiled to Astrakhan.

For four years he was to live in that distant city without time's cooling his desire for vengeance.

At last Alexis died, leaving the throne to Feodor, who recalled him immediately. He had hastened to Moscow, and even before he took possession of the administration, he had involved his enemies in a terrible law case. He accused them all together of plundering the treasury, of attempts by poison on the person of the late Czar and of evil practices closely related to magic and necromancy. The judges speedily condemned Matveiev to end his days in a fortress in Siberia, Ivan Narishkin to the knout, and Athanasius Narishkin to be burned alive. But

[1] 1670.

the timid Feodor, whom Alexis had cunningly made godfather to Peter, took fright. He was silly enough to commute the sentences of the Czarina's two brothers to exile, and stood out against shutting Natalia up in a convent.

This weak, dyspeptic sovereign, who had suffered from scrofula since infancy, was anyhow easy enough to lead. Unfortunately, his taste for vocal music, for stallions and for brick buildings was before long extended to take in a very dangerous spirit of curiosity with regard to the sciences and the inventions of foreigners. The Romanovs all have the same reprehensible leaning: they turn their eyes to the west! So Feodor took steps to found a printing-press and then a Slavo-Graeco-Latin academy. And finally he chose a counselor, the ambitious Yazikov.

This rascal had in vain put a severe curb on the favourite; the continual illnesses of the Czar made his position a precarious one. Neither of the two parties organized to swing the succession their own way took any notice of him. He conceived the plan of forming a third party, which should look to a direct heir, and accordingly plotted to bring about the remarriage of Feodor, whose first wife had died almost at the same time as their only son. In the autumn of the previous year therefore, taking advantage of a momentary improvement in his master's health, he had carried him off hunting. In the priest's house where their meal was served, the young prince noticed a girl of seventeen: Martha Apraxin, who was not there by mere chance. This ridiculous marriage was the result. The potions given by the physicians to the Czar had the exactly opposite effect to what was expected. The young man, without the least interest in his bride, took to a sick bed on his wedding night, never to rise from it again.

Martha, who was connected with the Matveiev family, had nevertheless obtained from Feodor an alleviation of the punish-

ment of the traitor, since transferred to Lukl in the district of Kaluga, and thus in a position to communicate easily with his accomplices. That was the pretty outcome of the murky machinations of Yazikov, who deserved death and would not escape it.

" His blood will soon be drained out of his veins," shouted Ivan Mihailovitch, infuriated by all these evil memories, never ceasing to stride up and down the room.

That was a promise certain of fulfilment, for the man who was detested by both parties was bound to be the first to fall. Afterwards would come the great struggle between the Miloslavskys and the Narishkins. He was not a whit daunted because the others appeared to be the stronger. They had the mass of the boyars on their side, the Patriarch, whose churches and monasteries Natalia loaded with benefits, the populace deceived by the apparent good health of the younger brother. For what had they all against Ivan? That he had weak sight, was lame, and touched with the falling sickness. But hadn't their Peter his blemishes too? It was only that they arranged to keep them hidden. No, he would give nothing away. That would run the risk of weakening the effect of the calumnies he was making ready to broadcast.

Let his enemies count up their numbers as much as they please! What is the good of numbers when they are divided among themselves and have no head?

In his camp there was a head — himself. The army was small but united. He was sure of his nephew Alexander and the two Tolstoys. Pushkin and Sakovnin, too, were no less devoted. The stupid Prince Hovansky would contribute the turbulent members of his sect. He had no doubt of victory. He hesitated a little only at the thought of winning at the expense of Sophia.

With regard to women he shared the views of the popular

song that wants to see them sitting behind thirty locks and thirty keys so that the wind may not ruffle their hair, nor the sun burn them, nor handsome young men entice them. Are they not all armed with wicked tongues, very susceptible to wine, and incapable of letting slip an opportunity to pleasure a lover?

The Czarevna Sophia was of a breed both different and worse, happily rare in Muscovy, from which had come Marpha, the daring creature who set Novgorod aflame with rebellion, and Helena Glinsky the mother of Ivan the Terrible.

Alexis had given her a learned tutor, the famous Simon Polotski. That astrologer, drugged and drunk with *belles lettres,* encouraged her to make verses. Another dog of a monk, Sylvester Medviedev, praised the turn of those verses, extolled the learning and the wisdom of Sophia. So well did he fan the flame, to such good purpose did he repeat to her the history of Pulcheria, that she came to love glory and to desire to govern so as to win it. Once she was shut up in the convent like all Czar's daughters, none of whom may marry, she never resigned herself to her fate but determined to return to the Court. That was when she began to display unbounded tenderness for her sick brother, sending morning and night to enquire after him, and mourning bitterly that she was not allowed to nurse him. Touched by so much zeal, Feodor sent for her to his bedside. Thereafter Sophia had no other aim than to see the Czar dead, Ivan in his place, and herself Regent.

Despite his contempt for the sex, Miloslavsky admired the mixture of cunning and energy that made the foundation of his niece's character. She managed to hide the most insidious manners under a mask of piety, already by degrees inducing everyone to endure without too much repugnance the idea of one day being ruled by a woman. He had less liking for the Marcian

of this new Pulcheria, who was all the more eager to seize the power insomuch as she was looking forward to sharing it with her lover.

Was it then merely to see the triumph of Basil Galitzin that Miloslavsky had been intriguing for months in the shadow? He shrugged his fat shoulders and a grimace of scorn passed over his lips. He who refuses to make sacrifices for revenge has ill learned the art of hating. Eagerness for action was the one motive that dominated him, and barren jealousy was no longer capable of holding him back.

When Alexander and the two Tolstoys came in, he threw himself at them, pressing them with pertinent questions. Were the emissaries informed? Had they found that fellow who was so marvellously the double of one of the Narishkins? He would most certainly want him. Peter Tolstoy, the most excited of them, made answer for the three, gesticulating, throwing himself about. He fell silent all at once and all their faces grew pale as they heard the tolling of a knell.

The great bell of the Kremlin, smitten with blows of a hammer, was announcing the death of Feodor.

" Already! " cried Ivan Mikhailovitch in annoyance.

Let the others get to work in accordance with their instructions! He must hasten to the Palace.

The streets of the Kremlin were filled to bursting with great crowds which the *Streltsy* were holding back. The hour had not yet come when everyone, rich or poor, would be admitted to file before the remains of their master and to kiss his cold hand.

The troops opened a way for Miloslavsky, who went up the steps of the staircase. The apartments were full of rumours. It was told now that the Czarevna was displaying colossal grief. Through her lamentations kept recurring always the same

phrase: *" Wicked people have killed my brother."* She had been carried away fainting into her *terem.*

The Patriarch, accompanied by his bishops and followed by a throng of boyars came out of the death chamber with more haste than ceremony. All walked rapidly down the corridors. Were they preparing to deliberate at once? Miloslavsky hurried up behind them, casting his eyes about for Basil Galitzin.

When the Council hall was filled with those who had the right to be there, and others as well, the Patriarch Joachim faced the assembly. One of his hands rested on the gospels and the other held the holy Cross aloft. He said:

" Feodor Alexievitch has passed to a better world. He leaves no child behind, but two brothers, the Czarewitch Ivan Alexievitch and the Czarewitch Peter Alexievitch. The Czarewitch Ivan is sixteen years old, but his soul is sick and his body of feeble health. The Czarewitch Peter is ten years of age. Which of these two princes shall inherit the throne? Whom will you name Czar of all the Russias, Great, Little, and White? Shall it be one of these, or both jointly and together? I put the question to you, and I demand that you shall speak the truth in all conscience, as you would speak it in the presence of God himself. Whosoever among you shall allow himself to be guided by his passions, let the fate of the traitor Judas be upon him."

" Ivan shall be our Czar," declared Pushkin, and some uttered their approval.

" No," broke in old Odoïevsky, " we no longer wish the Duma to be held beside a sick bed. Let Peter be our Czar! "

" Let Peter be our Czar! " repeated scores of voices.

Basil Galitzin remained silent. Miloslavsky observed that it was a serious thing to change the natural order of succession.

The discussion grew so heated that in the end it was impos-

sible to hear anything. In the uproar that went on and on a boyar hidden at the back of one of the groups cried out:

" Put it to the people."

The Patriarch, unable to restore silence, consented to this. Escorted by the whole asembly, Joachim went out on the Red Staircase, round which was massed an enormous crowd. At his appearance all heads were bowed, and his noble voice resounded.

" You know, brethren, that all the Russians blessed of God were under the sceptre of the great Czar Michael Feodorovitch of happy memory. After him the sceptre descended to Alexis Mihailovitch of happy memory. At his decease the throne fell to Feodor Alexievitch, autocrat of all the Russias. Today by the will of the Omnipotent, the Czar has passed to his eternal rest, leaving two brothers. Which of these is to be Czar of all the Russias? "

" Ivan! "

But the feeble murmurs of the few supporters of the eldest were immediately drowned by the uproar of the vast majority shouting out:

" Peter! Peter! Peter! "

The Patriarch blessed the populace, which fell silent.

" Shall he reign alone, or jointly with his brother? "

" Alone! Alone! Alone! "

Galitzin, hardly able to breathe, bowed his head. Miloslavsky was already at his side.

" So blood will have to flow if right is to prevail! "

But the other indicated with a gesture that he would rather give up the claim. " The devil take all your honest men! " thought Ivan Miloslavsky. Happily Sophia was of sterner temper!

He left them all to take their servile way to the apartments of

Natalia Naryshkin, and himself slipped off to the *terem* of Sophia.

Many had never before had the honour to behold the "bright eyes of His Majesty." They were struck with admiration.

This boy of ten seemed tall enough and strong enough for fifteen. Auburn hair, short and curly, framed his round face, somewhat over-brown, with a wart on the right cheek, and thick lips. He had the radiant brow of his mother, who stood beside him, and the same black eyes, but more vivacious. Standing very erect, because he was softening his childish legs, he listened to the words of the Patriarch prostrated at his feet.

"In the name of the whole people of the Orthodox faith, I beseech you to accept the sceptre of your ancestors and to condescend to be our Czar."

Putting out his hand, Peter helped the Patriarch to rise and said, as though repeating a lesson learned by heart, that he was still too young to govern and that his elder brother would fill the throne better than himself.

Respectful cries of protest went up. Joachim knelt once more and recounted all the defects of the Czarewitch Ivan, and laid stress on the unanimous wish of the people.

"Lord," he chanted impressively, "reject not the humble petition of thy slaves."

The boy reddened but made no answer, for his people had not put any other speeches in his mouth. So Joachim blessed him, making the sign of the Cross, and gave him the title of Czar of all the Russias. Then the archdeacon intoned the prayer for long life for the sovereign.

And while a secretary from the top of the Red Stair was announcing to the satisfied crowd that Peter had accepted the sceptre of Monomakh, Sophia was disconsolately sitting in the *terem* surrounded by her faithful monks and courtiers.

" There is no justice in this election," she repeated. " Peter is only a boy. Ivan is of age. He is the one who should be Czar. Fetch the Patriarch here."

The venerable old man, still followed by his bishops, consented to come to the Czarevna.

Anger blinded the young woman.

" In the name of legitimacy and the right of primogeniture, I insist on your annulling this election," she commanded.

The pontiff haughtily replied that an election once proclaimed was not a thing that could be altered. The unyielding tone of the head of the Church abashed her to some extent, and she became soft and entreating.

" At any rate let them both share the crown."

And learnedly she quoted the examples of Pharaoh and Joseph, of Arcadius and Honorius, of Basil the First and Constantine the Eighth.

Joachim shook his head at each pair of names.

" Polyarchy is fatal," said he. " There must be one Czar alone. Such is the will of God."

And he withdrew.

Ivan Mihailovitch had privately urged her not to be so insistent at this awkward interview. At last she condescended to give way to his arguments.

" Sisters," she said, rising and already assuming the smile she must needs display elsewhere, " let us go and pay the proper compliments to our master."

Peter gave her his hand to kiss with a very gracious air, but when it came to Miloslavsky, he drew back from him quickly.

For five years the boy had hated this man in secret. He had made his mother weep; and he had forced his little playmate Andrew Matveiev to go away to Siberia at the same time as his father.

CHAPTER TWO

THE Narishkins had won. It remained for them to consolidate their power. Anxiously they turned to Matveiev. As he enjoyed high prestige among the other boyars with whom the young monarch's family was far from popular, he seemed to be the only one who could help Natalia to assert her claim to the title of Czarina-dowager and to the regency during Peter's minority.

The very same day that Miloslavsky and Yazikov were driven from the Court, a trusty courier, Lapuhin, a noble with a seat in the Duma, set out for Luki with the twofold mission of telling Matveiev that all his honours were restored to him and that his presence was desired at Moscow as soon as might be. Soon Athanasius Narishkin was despatched to meet him and bid him make haste.

Events were indeed happening thick and fast. The opposing party was far from accepting its defeat as final.

At the funeral ceremonies for Feodor the Czarevna Sophia had affronted Natalia by getting into the litter before her; Natalia had at once withdrawn. Her behaviour had earned her the disapproval of the aged sisters of Alexis, who had followed their niece's example and left their convent.

And again, on the eve of the obsequies, a deputation from the *Streltsy* had come to the Palace with complaints against sixteen of their own colonels and a general of the ordinary troops.

This corps, founded more than a century earlier by Ivan the Terrible, possessed considerable privileges. While the other soldiers, who were either Cossacks or slaves equipped at the expense of their masters, received no pay, the government provided the *Streltsy* with subsistence and a house in peace as well as in war. They enjoyed the status of free men, paid no taxes, and were amenable to a special tribunal of their own.

Since the time of Alexis they had been granted the right to engage in industry and agriculture. If the wardenship of the frontiers was entrusted to some of their regiments, the fifteen thousand who were stationed in Moscow with their families were entirely occupied in the service of the Czar and the Palace. The privileges granted them in trade induced wealthy merchants, eager to parade in a handsome uniform, to procure admission to this corps whose highest soldierly qualities were insubordination, the desire for a certain liveliness, and a selfish regard for nothing but their own affairs. No man of birth, in spite of the advantages of the position, would ever consent to accept the command of one of these regiments. Thus the higher grades of officers were taken from among themselves, which in the end gave the organization something of the character of a caste in itself. The worthless officers misused the privates in every kind of way. They forced them to cultivate their gardens for them, to repair their houses, and did not hesitate to take gifts of money from those who preferred staying at home to mounting guard.

The deputation, after putting forward these perennial grievances, declared that their chief cause for indignation was that already they had submitted their complaints several times to Yazikov without obtaining any reply from him.

The son of the aged and paralyzed Dolgoruky, the ebullient Yury Alexievitch, who had just been placed at the head of the *Streltsy* Office in place of the late favourite, declared that matters would henceforth be dealt with more promptly.

He was as good as his word. With the rather simple-minded design of keeping in the good books of people of this sort, the Narishkins ordered the colonels and the general to be handed over to the *Streltsy* for direct judgment.

This decree, precisely calculated to increase the disorder of

the corps, delighted Miloslavsky, who since his disgrace had left neither his house nor his bed, giving out that he was ill so as to lull the suspicions of his enemies.

For all that, every night he received, at the same time as his nephew and the Tolstoys, two of the colonels who had kept their men's confidence, by name Tsykler and Ozerov.

"Keep repeating to your *Streltsy,*" he told them, "that they will get nothing from the Narishkins, whose horses trample down the common folk in the streets, and who despise them. But the Czarewitch Ivan, if he had the crown, would be able to load them with benefits. You must inform them, too, that Peter is not the son of Alexis. Natalia had him, like the daughter who bears her own name, by Tiphon Nikititch Streshniev, the boyar she thinks so much of. These two young ones are endowed with too good health to be of the same blood as the others. Inflame your troops against the Narishkins, against Peter, against the sorcerer Matveiev and against that abominable fellow Yazikov. They must die."

This advice was carried out.

"We will put Ivan on the throne by force," swore the *Streltsy* in the taverns and the public vapour baths.

Their brandy-fed wrath was most cunningly excited. One day Ivan Narishkin dared to beat the wife of one of them in their own quarter. Alexander Miloslavsky had found the double of the Czarina's brother, and his uncle was making use of him.

Although she was confined in the *terem,* the Czarevna Sophia on her side was spinning many intrigues. The monks, popes, nuns, good wives and good poor folk telling their beads, and the sellers of toilet articles, all the people who swarmed in her apartments served her as emissaries.

Thus she was in constant communication with Prince Hovansky, who was actually appealing to the fanatical members of

his sect. This stupid person prided himself on being one of the most influential heads of the *raskolniky,* who maintained that the Patriarch Nikon had recently interpolated errors into the sacred books under pretext of correcting them. The ancient works, which had been written by illiterate copyists were, according to them, the only authentic ones. No one but the priests who were the slaves of Joachim, they averred, could approve the vile heresy of writing Jesus as Issus instead of Jissus, and that other not less horrible heresy of making the sign of the cross with three fingers when the rules lay down that it shall be done with two.

While Sophia was compromising herself in this way without rhyme or reason, and was rejoicing too soon to learn that this noisy crowd was starting its manifestations in public places, the mistress of her wardrobe, nimble Fedora Rodimitza, who had a penchant for burly men with gold-braided coats, was coming and going between the *terem* and the *Streltsy* quarter. She brought back wonderful news. A lieutenant-colonel had been pitched out of a window into the street by his own men. The spirit of rebellion was already spreading among the other troops. Why were these gallant men being kept on the curb?

Sophia was just as unable to understand the reason for Miloslavsky's backing and filling. Every night she sent him fresh emissaries. He gave them all the same answer — " Patience." He was set on not allowing his most ancient enemy to be spared; he was waiting for the return of Matveiev.

There was no less impatience in the Palace. Natalia had calculated that her protector would be able to arrive in the evening of May 1st, or at two next morning if he lost no time. But he was not taking the trouble to hurry.

Everywhere the authorities of the towns and the monasteries

went out to meet him. This coming back was turned into a triumphal progress. He replied to long addresses, told the story of his woes, extolled the justice of God, who can distinguish the innocent man unjustly punished from the really guilty. Here he went to mass; there he accepted a friend's invitation to dine with him. The day after, finding himself with a touch of indigestion, he would spend the whole day resting. At last on May 12th, he did actually arrive in Moscow. Tears rose to his eyes at the sight of the grass that had sprung up in the courtyard of his house. No one ever lived in the home of a man who had been arrested or exiled for fear of ill-luck. He took pleasure in recalling at length the times of his prosperity. The year he had built this very house there was a shortage of bricks: the people and the *Streltsy* who loved him so much had brought him stones taken from their ancestors' tombs.

It was dinned into him that there was a very bad spirit abroad among the *Streltsy*. With lofty wisdom, wagging his white beard, he observed, " When they are given their head they are prone to run into the greatest excesses." Then he gave orders to put his house into proper condition. Many important people would no doubt be coming to visit him. And many did present themselves, of every kind, some to congratulate him sincerely, others sent by Sophia to observe the effects of age and exile on a brain that had once been dangerous. Miloslavsky alone disdained to put in an appearance. However, he did send his excuses, alleging a continuous illness that had kept him to his room for several weeks.

At daybreak on May 15th, the day after this noble reception at Matveiev's house, Peter Tolstoy and Alexander Miloslavsky betook themselves to the *Streltsy* quarter. As soon as they got there they began to run about the streets calling for help. The soldiers came out of the houses, halberd in fist, in their red

shirts, too much in a hurry to have put on their caftans. Excited and curious they thronged about the new-comers. " What was happening? " The others waited till the crowd had become big enough, and then shouted:

" Last night the Narishkins murdered the Czarewitch Ivan! "

An angry growling came from out all those big beards. Never would they let such a crime go unpunished! That very moment they would go and exterminate the traitors. Lifted hands suddenly called for silence. All ears turned to the Kremlin. Yes — the Czarewitch was dead indeed! The bell of Ivan the Great was sounding the tocsin yonder.

" The drums! Bring cannon! " ordered the soldiers.

They sent off to bring their comrades, their wives were hustled to fetch weapons at once; great goblets of vodka were emptied. Most of them cut away the butt of their halberds . . . so that they could run the faster.

" Kill the Narishkins! Kill them! Kill them! "

The call to arms rang through the whole quarter. The drums beat and while the bells tolled the roaring mob of the red shirts started off followed by dancing women and squealing children.

Matveiev had spent the morning at the Palace. Now it was midday. He was making ready to go home and was on the steps waiting for his carriage and his retinue, when men came hurrying to warn him that infuriated bands of *Streltsy* were marching against the fortress.

" Can it be possible? How politely they offered me bread and salt the day I came back! "

At length he ordered Colonel Gorushkin to have the gates of the Kremlin shut. It was too late. The *Streltsy* who guarded them were already showing no reluctance to be rough with the

boyars, who were coming in great numbers eager to defend the throne or to get into shelter themselves.

" They believe that the Czarewitch Ivan has been killed," explained these magnates.

Many of them had been hard put to it to escape from the red flood that was beginning to invade the Kremlin. From every street, from every square around rose the shouts of the rebels. The court of the Palace was speedily filled with howling men.

" The Narishkins! The Narishkins! Matveiev," repeated thousands of furious voices. " Hand them over to us or we will wipe out everybody."

That uproar of shouts, of beating fists, of footsteps drumming on the pavement, terrified Peter, pale behind the window-panes through which he saw the points of the halberds and the barrels of the muskets.

" Don't be afraid," Natalia bade her son clasping him close.

Matveiev approved her proposal to present the two boys to the crowd, and ordered the Czarewitch to be brought. The invalid appeared, supported by some of the boyars, stupid-looking, with mouth hanging open. Someone quickly raised his eyelids that constantly kept drooping.

Natalia then went gallantly out of the Red Staircase, preceded by courtiers carrying their young masters high in air.

" There," she proclaimed facing the mob, " is your Czar Peter Alexievitch. And here is the Czarewitch Ivan Alexievitch. You see for yourselves that he is alive."

She fell back in fear. Four insolent *Streltsy* came mounting up the steps, with outstretched hands. They examined Peter from head to heel and felt his brother's legs.

" Are you really the Czarewitch Ivan Alexievitch? " asked one of the soldiers.

" Yes, yes," said the idiot, impassively.

The four daring ones in the end took off their caps and went down the stair very chastened and humble, answering their comrades' queries from a distance. The men nearest the stairway were already becoming quiet. Only those at the back who could see little and hear nothing continued to cry out for the Narishkins and Matveiev. The boyar thought they wanted him to address them. He came forward, handsome of feature, noble of bearing, and his majestic white beard moved and swayed as he spoke.

He recounted his old campaigns when he led his gallant *Streltsy* to the fray. He reminded them, doctoring the truth in all good faith, that the foe always fled at their coming. He entreated them not to tarnish so pure a splendour of renown, to flee the counsel of the wicked and to remain faithful to the throne.

Voices were raised approving " You are right. Intercede for us with the Czar. Get him to pardon us! "

Slowly the *Streltsy* emptied the courtyard. But they fell back no further than the great square. Casks of brandy had been brought there by some providence. They applied themselves to drinking these, and the uproar began again.

This was the moment when the head of the *Streltsy* Office passed through, the hot-blooded Dolgoruky. He scolded them for their disgraceful behaviour, with the most pointed and stinging insults, and ordered them to get back to their own quarter immediately. His harangue displeased them. They protested at first, then flared up. The offender was seized, knocked down, trampled upon, and his body, hurled up into the air, fell back on the halberds, which impaled a corpse.

And now the soldiers scoffed at the thought of pardon. All they wanted was to punish and to massacre more and more.

The tide of red shirts flowed back towards the Palace, inundated the court, the stairway, the apartments. All were roaring like lions. When they had knocked Matveiev on the head they went off, obeying orders, to hunt for the Narishkins. Breaking down doors, threatening everyone they met, respecting nothing, they made their way into the bedchambers, into the *terems,* into the oratories, into the churches, clambered up the turrets, visited the basements and the cellars. They seized the dwarfs that swarmed about the court, pulled their coarse topknots, hammered their heads savagely, forcing the little men to reveal the hiding-places of the traitors. One of the most hideous of them, who belonged to Athanasius Narishkin, gave up his master to save his own greenish skin. There was a moment of misgiving. Had they not killed this one already? A mere mistake. The other dead man was only a certain person called Soltikov.

Murdering went on pretty well at random. The Red Square was covered with corpses. Between the Patriarch's palace and the Tshudov convent some of them were diverting themselves by cutting Prince Gregory Romodanovski into little pieces.

And the riot was extending to the whole city. On the other bank of the river a distant cousin of Narishkin was butchered simply because he bore the accursed name, and Yazikov was killed in the house of a priest in the suburbs.

Day was now darkening. The weary *Streltsy* decided to join their waiting wives. A kindly thought came to them as they took their homeward way, to go and apologize to old Dolgoruky for the murder of his son. The paralytic noble thanked them courteously for their polite visit and even had money distributed to them. When the ruffians had gone away, he growled: "They have eaten the pike, but he has still got his teeth left." A slave carried the word to the soldiers who came back and

hauled the invalid out into the street and mutilated his corpse.

From the early afternoon Peter had taken refuge with the Czarina in the treasure chamber of the Palace. The shadows of night did not avail to soothe his nervous fever. Behind the greeny haze that clung about the flame of the tall wax candles, his eye, that never forgot the thing it had once seen, still stared at lifted pikes, bristling furious beards, red sleeves hustling his mother, hairy fists stabbing Matveiev. He panted wildly. Natalia held him almost entirely lying upon her. The boy crushed his head against her bosom and that soft cradling soothed and quieted his distress. The dreadful pictures receded, disappeared. He fell asleep at last, his face buried in his mother's breast.

The din of the drums and fresh outcries around the Palace woke him early next day. What did those rascals want now?

As they went away again quickly, he was told nothing. They were demanding to have Ivan Narishkin given up to them within twenty-four hours.

The day seemed long to the boy sitting in a corner of the treasure chamber. No noise could be heard in the Kremlin. But his eyes were less reassured than his ears. The courtiers showed anxious faces. The popular tumult continued, and even increased. The ruffians had begun to pillage the boyars' houses. They looted the wine, the rich stuffs, the plate. A few slaves having defended the masters' property, they seized the records office, to discourage this unlooked-for zeal, and presently they burned the acts and proclaimed the emancipation of the serfs. Things were assuredly taking a very bad turn.

That was Sophia's opinion, too, and she secretly accused Miloslavsky of cowardice. Her uncle was too obstinately playing the sick man. Instead of taking action he was crossing out names on a list. She would have liked to see him by the side

of Tsykler, directing the revolt towards the only real objects to be achieved — the throne for Ivan, the regency for herself. If Galitzin also was holding prudently aloof, he had at any rate warned her beforehand that he would not dip his hands in blood. So she determined to push her affairs forward herself. The *Streltsy* were clamouring for Ivan Narishkin; she would have him handed over to them.

Next day, May 17th, the Czarevna in her softest and most persuasive tones entreated Natalia to pretend to give way to the rebels. Otherwise those brutes would be capable of making an attempt on Peter's life. The boyars now immured for three days joined their urgent representations to hers. Old Odoïevsky pleaded with simple-minded cowardliness: " Sacrifice him for the safety of your family and of all of us your devoted servants to the death." Sophia cried out against this. She was not for giving up Ivan Narishkin; she proposed that he should betake himself in their company to the Church of the Holy Shroud of Our Lord, where he would be safe, for who would dare commit the sacrilegious deed of killing him there? Natalia, completely worn out, revealed her brother's hiding-place, and the young man was sent for. He came in very calmly and said in a voice with no hint of reproach: " Czarina, I am going to certain death. I have only one prayer, that mine may be the last blood shed." Sophia once again swore that he was running no danger, and the better to protect him, she said, placed in his hand an icon of the Mother of God. He asked to have the sacrament.

" Make haste then," cried old Odoïevsky, " if you don't want us all to be massacred."

Directly the procession had gone inside the Church the populace, informed by the Czarevna's messengers, broke down the doors. Their victim was seized and dragged by the hair to the

tower of Constantine. There they hacked off his legs, his arms and his head, and chopped the trunk in pieces. While the riot was going on in the church one of the *Streltsy* had threatened Peter with his halberd.

" Not here, in the presence of God," adjured Natalia stretching out her hand.

The man fell back. But the features of his face remained fixed in the boy's memory. Nor did he ever forget that only one living being had the courage to go and search among the piles of corpses in the Red Square and rescue the poor remains of Matveiev's body, and that this was a negro, the slave John.

On May 18th, the *Streltsy* appeared at the Palace once more; they demanded that Ivan should be proclaimed Czar. After a week of haughty vacillation, the Patriarch, suddenly yielding to Sophia's will, begged the idiot lad to deign acceptance of a share in his brother's throne. The sick boy, with eyes continually shut, waggled his chin in sign of acquiescence. The next thing was that the Duma, hastily assembled, decreed that the new sovereign's name should stand first in official documents. The Czarevna then, entreated to assume the regency, begged in all humility that she should be spared so heavy a burden, and in the end only consented to take it after repeated urgings on the part of the boyars.

Old Cyril Narishkin, astonished to find himself still alive, was shut up in a monastery. Basil Galitzin became the lieutenant of the two Czars at Novgorod, with residence in Moscow, head of the Ambassadors' Office, keeper of the seal of State. Miloslavsky had the Treasury Office, Prince Hovansky the *Streltsy* Office. Peter Tolstoy was placed with the Czar Ivan, Tsykler received the title of Treasurer to the Crown and Fedora Rodinitza was given burly Colonel Ozerov for a husband.

Money was distributed to the *Streltsy*, who speedily laid a fresh charge against their victims. They were proud to mount guard before the corpses of the Red Square. But in time the stench of their corruption inconvenienced them. And the constant company of birds of prey and famishing dogs also caused them a great deal of annoyance. So they gave vent to the prayer that in place of this human dung heap there should be erected a handsome stone pillar to commemorate their brilliant exploit. The Regent granted their request by an infamous ukase.

The consecration of the Czars took place on the 25th of June. Sophia had hastened to have duplicates made of the crown and the sceptre of Monomakh, which are twelve centuries old and are the most venerated of all the score or so in the Treasury.

The two boys, clad in cloth of gold embroidered with pearls and covered with precious stones — there were gems even on their sable caps and their morocco leather shoes — kissed the holy relics in the *chambre à facettes*, and Prince Basil Galitzin announced that the procession was ready to go forward. In the middle of the Cathedral of the Annunciation the pavement of which was completely hidden under scarlet cloth, there had been raised a stage with two chairs bedight with precious stones and intended for the Czars.

Having annointed them and made them read the creed, — though neither of them was able to read — the Patriarch placed the crowns on their heads and entrusted them with the sceptres and the globes. Then all the congregation intoned the prayers, and the procession set forth, escorted by the *Streltsy*, for the cathedral where the sovereigns knelt before the tombs of their ancestors.

That same day young Sheremetev was made a boyar. He had not abandoned Peter's party. He remained determined to serve

him while serving Ivan and Sophia. An honest, simple-minded creature he was . . . setting his country on a level with his ambitions, but far, far above any dynastic squabbles.

The great day of the consecration ceremony was, alas! followed by black morrows.

Ever since that stupid Prince Hovansky had bidden the *Raskolniky* go out and bellow in the streets, those vehement vagabonds, veritable scum without the least sense of what was reasonable or seasonable, had been outrageously busy with their turbulent task. They planted their street pulpits everywhere, opened their books, lighted their wax tapers and preached their self-styled pure good orthodoxy.

Hovansky pleaded their cause at the Court, and treacherously urged the Regent to grant them the honour of a public discussion in the open air with the high dignitaries of the Church. Sophia and Galitzin, having been informed that the prince was plotting to have the Pontiff murdered under cover of a riot, avoided the trap. As they owed a certain amount of gratitude to these rascals who had been so useful to them a few days earlier, they consented to convoke them in assembly in the *chambre à facettes,* but took the precaution of informing their spokesman that the government had made up its mind to take the side of the true orthodoxy.

The assembly was held in July. The Patriarch, eight metropolitans, five archbishops, two bishops and a multitude of priests surrounded the two Czars with the Regent, the Czarina Natalia, the Czarina Martha, Feodor's widow, and two aged sisters of Alexis. The detested sight of all those women incensed the dissenters to such a degree that they first of all went away, to come back presently armed with all their paraphernalia and read an endless request, the gist of which was all in the direction of the re-establishment of the old belief. Insults

rained so thick upon the head of the Church that an archbishop protested. Out dashed an opponent and clutched him by the beard and the pair rolled on the ground together. In a precarious lull the Patriarch, in the midst of continual interruptions, refuted, documents in hand, the absurdities uttered the moment before. The clanging of the bells calling the faithful to vespers brought this disorderly session to an end. The *Raskolniky* dashed out waving their arms and shouting to the crowd: "Victory, victory! Thus ought we to believe and thus should we make the sign of the cross!"

Sophia knew how to govern. She gave orders to shorten Nikita, the leader of the band, by the head, and the others became reasonable at once.

It remained to get rid of Prince Hovansky, who spent his days going about Moscow amid the plaudits of the populace. The arrogance of this descendant of several Polish and Hungarian Kings knew no bounds. He displayed insolent splendor, dared to quarrel with Miloslavsky and even threaten him.

The uncle, always prudent, retired to one of his pleasure houses from which he wrote to Sophia that this stupid madman was simply contemplating seating himself on the throne. So as to strengthen her in this idea he made haste to have documents drawn up disclosing that the prince was planning to blot out the Patriarch, the boyars, the Czars and their family with the sole exception of the Czarevna Catherine, whom he reserved as a wife for his son.

The first day of the year 7191,[1] the whole court, dreading a fresh revolt, left Moscow and made for the Troïtsa convent, a dozen German leagues from the capital.

The huge moat and the battlemented brick rampart, flanked by towers with embrasures for cannon and muskets, encircling

[1] September 1, 1682

the monastery precincts, which enclose a palace and nine churches, made it like a fortress. The sovereigns often took refuge in this monastery where Saint Sergius is buried as well as Boris Godunov who poisoned himself in it.

Prince Hovansky and his son were invited to come to the Troïtsa. But they never even saw the tip of its spires. Men set to lie in ambush murdered them on the way. The first fury of the *Streltsy* was upon consideration very speedily turned to fear. Humble, with ropes round their necks, imploring forgiveness and offering to destroy that commemorative pillar, they took their way to the monastery followed by their weeping wives. Galitzin let them have the pardon they sought, secretly determined to transfer the worst elements among them to the frontier towns.

On November 6th, the Czars came back to Moscow in triumph. Sophia kept Ivan with her and sent Peter, his family and his adherents, to Préobrajensky where they had already lived in Feodor's time.

The boy, who had been in continual fits for more than five months, breathed easier in the carriage that crossed the river Yauza on a raft. They were already three-quarters of an hour away from the Kremlin, and in less than another three-quarters they would be in their village. At last he would be able to run about and play.

CHAPTER THREE

PETER loved the little pleasure house of Préobrajensky standing embosomed among lovely meadow lands surrounded by woods and wide desmesnes now left to run wild.

In the days of his father, who delighted to go hawking there, there were three thousand falcons, four thousand horses, a hundred thousand pigeons and servants innumerable.

In the evenings Alexis openly and the Czarina from a hole in the wall saw plays given by the German artists of the *Niemitskaya-Sloboda*[1] whose fringe of gardens almost touched the village. In this suburb lived all the foreigners, who were prohibited from taking up their abode within the holy city.

So every autumn the boy went to Préobrajensky with his nurse Neonila Lvov. When he was three years old she gave him up to his mother who thenceforth took him everywhere with her. Natalia was passionately devoted to her son, covered him with kisses, called him " my diamond." The father showed him no less ardent affection. The courtiers admired his sturdy looks.

He could be seen driving about the gardens in a little car inlaid with gold, harnessed to little ponies bridle-led by four dwarfs. A fifth followed behind, riding on an animal suited to his own size.

These strange little men, smaller than himself, with beards and grown-up features filled the curious-minded child with wonder. He would pinch the lobes of their ears, tickle them under the nose, laugh with glee at their grimaces, kiss them,

[1] *Niemoï* in Russian means *dumb*. The first Germans who went to Moscow were called *Niemtsy* because they could speak no Russian. Later on the word served to distinguish foreigners of other nations, who were all, for the same reason, looked upon as Germans. *Niemitskaya Sloboda* should therefore be translated as *German suburb,* it being understood that German here merely means " foreign."

hug them. He was impetuous in everything and never still for a moment.

One day when Alexis was giving an audience to the ambassador Lyseck, the boy suddenly thrust violently at the door against which his mother was leaning and watching the reception through the keyhole, and broke into laughter at the flabbergasted faces of the boyars. For it was the very first time a heathen had the chance to set eyes on their Czarina.

The oldest among them, and not by any means for the first time, blamed the bad upbringing the Czarevitch was receiving.

Ancient usage insisted that the sons of the ruling sovereign should live strictly confined in the *terem* until they were seven years old. They ought only to be taken to the pleasure houses in a closed carriage with the curtains tightly drawn so that their pure eyes might not be sullied by the sight of any foreigner.

But Alexis, instead of leaving everything in God's hands, believed the precepts of the doctors, who had convinced him, after the death of the Miloslavsky's last son, that such treatment was contrary to the laws of health. He had accordingly decided to bring Peter up in a completely different fashion. The boy had riding exercise in a court inside the Palace; he was put to shooting and various athletic games; in winter they built snow mountains for him to slide on. Natalia, who had got a glimpse of western ways during her stay in the household of Matveiev, so keenly interested in all new things, could not but approve these wise measures. The same tendency led her to give her son foreign playthings also. Thus he received from her a musical box and cymbals of German make. The mere noise of these brass discs clashed one upon the other delighted him. But nothing gave him more happiness than a little sabre a trader presented to him on his third birthday. It was the custom for their subjects to offer presents to the Czar and his family on

feast days. These presents were usually placed in the hall of the Treasure with the imperial valuables. But Peter refused to be parted from this one. Always prone to swift enthusiasm he was fain to kiss the giver whose big face glowing with pride had never faded from his eyes that were endowed with such extraordinary powers of memory.

To please his son Alexis had other weapons of the same kind, as well as two little wooden cannon, made for the boy and his special playfellows, Andrew Matveiev, Joachim Woronin and Gregory Lukin, so that they might play at soldiers together. The Czar had not long to watch their mimic wars in the Préobrajensky woods. A few months later he died, though not before he had appointed a certain Scotsman named Menzies to be Peter's governor.

This one time pupil of the Jesuits at Douai, highly educated and able to speak every language in Europe, had found himself stuck in Muscovy against his will. He was travelling in the North for his pleasure and was making ready to go home to his own country when an intrigue with the wife of a colonel in the Lithuanain army forced him to kill the husband and subsequently take to flight. He lost himself in the forests and blundered across the frontier of the Czar's territory. Seized as a spy, he imagined he would get clear by confessing the exact truth. He was then offered the choice of serving in the army or going to Siberia, and preferred the former alternative. Alexis wished to see him, liked his looks, kept him at Court, married him to the wealthy widow of the famous Warner Muller who had discovered the secret of iron-making in this country, and presently named him ambassador to Pope Clement to propose to the Sovereign Pontiff the reunion of the Orthodox Church with Rome on certain conditions to which the Holy Father refused to consent. The Czar showed no

displeasure at this failure and continued to hold him in favour.

The Scotsman reckoned on fulfilling this new duty. But the fact that he was a foreigner roused the distrust of the boyars. Gradually he was pushed into the background. The Regent, after trying to make use of him as a spy on Peter and finding herself rebuffed, had just sent him to command a garrison at Smolensk, thus definitely separating him from a pupil who was a pupil only in name.

The little Czar kept the memory of a kindly face, words uttered in a cordial voice, and remembered also that the man's air and tone made a strong impression on him. No one remarked this secret inner shyness, for the boy had managed to hide his real feelings ever since the return of Miloslavsky.

He had not been frightened at his father's death nearly so much as at the appearance on the scene of the terrible enemy of his family. Servants were withdrawn from the weeping widow, Matveiev was driven away, his uncles were taken to prison. Around him he saw pallid faces, people uneasy and perturbed in every corner, the very aspect of things was changing. He hated the wicked cause of all the trouble and said so. His mother made him hold his tongue. This compulsory dissimulation was bitter to him, humiliated him. His young mind could not conceive how his good kind godfather Feodor, who coaxed and loved him, could let his friends be tormented like this.

It was not very long after these confused events that the Czar chose a tutor for him. Peter was five years old when one morning there came into the vestibule of the Palace a humble and effaced creature, Nikita Zotov, who claimed to be master of the best method for teaching reading and writing. The *djak* [2]

[2] Imperial secretary.

trembled and begged to be permitted to go away. It was necessary to wait until he recovered his wits before he was taken to the Czarevitch. On the way through the corridors he never stopped crossing himself. Before the boy's mother he fell on his knees, whimpered, declared himself unworthy to teach anyone so precious. Next day he seemed more assured. After the mass at which his new scholar had been sprinkled with holy water, he received noble rank from the Czar and a gift of a hundred roubles from the hands of the Patriarch. The long procession of glasses of brandy represented by this sum dazzled the drunkard. So overjoyed was he that he stripped himself in public, eager to put on his new clothes, the gift of Natalia.

A start was made with the alphabet. Peter easily came to recognize the shape of each letter but could not arrive at understanding the formation of syllables and words. Zotov next tried to teach him to write. He copied the signs well enough but without being able to join them together. The lines were full of meaningless spaces often filled with blots. The master next related the history of Muscovy, his father's campaigns. He listened with inattention, bored, fidgeting with his legs and eager to get it over and be allowed to get up. But when he was shown the pictures in the manuscript of the Palace library he was all attention. The *djak's* finger pointed out the figures. That one had won the battle, this was the one who was killed. He saw the combat, the generals, the enemy, and thereafter he forgot no single detail.

In the year 7188 (1680) Zotov was sent on a mission to the Tartars. On his return he resumed the interrupted lessons. The boy always called for pictures and demanded a commentary on them. Peter thus mounted the throne at ten years of age unable to read or to write. He hardly knew how to write his name.

But his whole entourage, not a whit less ignorant than himself, were not disturbed at this complete lack of scholarship.

As soon as he had come back from the Troïtsa, the young Czar once more ran freely about the Préobrajensky woods, avoiding the gloomy semblance of a court that surrounded his mother. Natalia was too sombre and pensive. She never smiled now except at him and at Tiphon Streshniev.

One day at the end of January he noticed as he went hither and thither — for his sharp eyes were always masters of all his thoughts — men hanging round in the stables with nothing to do. These were grooms and falconers from the days of Alexis. On the spot, for he was quick to make up his mind, he gave orders for them to be told that they could come and play at soldiers with him. A tall, burly groom was the first to present himself. Peter, crimson with delight, welcomed him warmly and asked his name. " Sergius Boshvotov " said the new-comer. Joachim Woronin was a little put out to be only the second to arrive. Next came their faithful comrade of the old days, Gregory Lukin. Servants belonging to the stables and to the Court joined them and before long they made up a little band that the Czar himself called his *poteshny,* his *amusers.* Peter had uniforms brought from Moscow for them, weapons, banners. He wished this play regiment to be altogether and exactly like every other real regiment. So German officers organized it on the usual model. This obstinate passion for exactly imitating what he had seen brought the boy, almost immediately, to want iron cannons instead of his two wooden pieces. On May 30th, his birthday, he persuaded one of the foreign captains, the artillery officer Simon Sommer, to let him fire off the gun.

No longer now does he need to turn over the leaves of illuminated manuscripts. Now he can compose as good pictures himself with real men. He never invents anything; he copies

everything. The *Streltsy* go for long route marches in the country, his *poteshny* shall go by several stages as far as the monastery of Kaliazin. On the way they bivouac and sleep on the ground, and Peter with them. It would never be proper playing at soldiers without living in real soldier fashion. And what are they doing now, those men? Zotov used to show him with his finger in the books, those men his father commanded, and who were besieging the Palace a few weeks ago. They all call one another thou and thee! Everybody must thee and thou him then! They mend their harness and their weapons themselves. Let a workshop be arranged for him, let him be given a little forge. Docilely, all he does repeats the doings of others. One day he sees a foreigner turning: he will have a lathe and begins to turn too. Sweat drips from his forehead. He has made up his mind to finish this round piece before night, and he goes at it desperately, courageously, obstinate. He is called; stamps a foot; refuses to appear. No doubt it is that intolerable gentleman bringing him papers to sign. His hand is held; the ink falls from the goose quill. Wouldn't a blot do?

From time to time he is penned up for a reading lesson or a writing lesson, and then he seems suddenly in a hurry to learn, impatient to get back to the games he regards as very serious matters.

Today he must climb into a carriage and, instead of waging the battle he had planned, go to Moscow and be bored. He does not envy poor Ivan shut up in the Kremlin all the year round, and because he loves him dearly he pities him. Once more he is being disturbed for the sake of an ambassador! He puts on his gold-embroidered clothes with no kind of pleasure, and that heavy heavy crown, and takes his seat on the double throne with the hole at the back through which Sophia prompts his replies. He stands up too soon, holds out his hand to be

kissed before his turn. The foreign diplomats tremble before that sullen look that is growing impatient simply because he is not in the midst of his *poteshny,* and are astonished as well to see him blush at the same time like a girl. The reason is just that this ceremoniousness weighs upon him and that inside he is really more shy and overawed than they are.

If his big sister wants to see him henceforth, let her come down to Préobrajensky. She comes compliant and complaisant, brings presents of diamond buckles and diamond buttons. He would rather have muskets from Brescia. She will get them for him. By the way, how are the grooms of his regiment? Is it true that ambassadors' speeches bore him? Next time shall she receive these people herself? The faithful boyars frown portentously at this; Peter on the contrary finds it extremely kind of the Regent. Let her be sure not to forget the muskets. She might add one or two nice drums. The parchment in the last one was no good, it has burst already. Sophia has got up into her litter again, escorted by the *Streltsy* all gorgeous in gold braid. She leans mockingly from the window. Wouldn't he also like a learned monk who would teach him Latin? Natalia's eyelids blink with anxiety; she is so terrified lest some treacherout catspaw may be placed near her son. Heaven grant that he may answer no!

"Don't forget the drums," cries the boy.

This energetic, headstrong young barbarian never consciously lets himself be guided by anybody and fancies he only obeys his own impulses. Thus he has all the sense of being free when he is merely enjoying in his own fashion a freedom that is imposed upon him. For nothing strikes him but the outward show of things and he never seeks into their causes. He sees, he acts, he hardly ever reasons. It displeases him not a whit to be deprived of power. But he would not endure now not to be

his own master. Is he happy? He would be were it not for these absurd ceremonies of the Kremlin and this secret malady that now and then overwhelms him of a sudden.

For now at very frequent intervals Peter is subject to attacks of a spasm in the brain. The convulsions begin with a grave contortion of the neck to the left and a violent contraction of the facial muscles. His physician, Doctor Zacharias der Hulst, on these occasions administers an efficacious sedative made of the stomach and wings of a magpie pounded together.

At night a kind of terror lays hold of him. Since he has become too old to bury his anguish in his mother's bosom he never sleeps alone. Every night he has in his bed a servant chosen by chance. Sometimes he sleeps with his head against the patient fellow's naked belly, sometimes with his hands clutching his shoulders. Above everything the man must not budge, if he does Peter wakes up in a wild frenzy of rage and batters him with his fists.

Ordinarily the attacks last only a few hours. But sometimes they are prolonged. In the year 7192 (1684) Peter is twice confined to his room for several weeks.

The next year he has smallpox, which is raging throughout Muscovy. Will he die? At Préobrajensky they fear it; in Moscow they hope he will. Natalia nurses him and with her his handsome new governor Boris Galitzin, a terrible drunkard, the friend of Doctor Zacharias and of many foreigners, cousin of the powerful Basil. The Patriarch has prayed so hard for the Czar that heaven grants his recovery. Peter wakes, alive, and wants to know what has happened during those days of gloom. Why is Miloslavsky's death kept from him at first? Nothing could delight him more. When he learns that piece of good news, he claps his hands and his big eyes shine with laughter. He would like to see the buried corpse, to trample on its face.

Yet his joy has a touch of suffering all the same; all of a sudden he misses the object of the hate that has lived inside him for years, and from which he feels he cannot sever himself.

The year 7193 (1685)! Never will he forget that happy date. Nor Sophia either though for more weighty and splendid reasons.

While Peter played or lay moaning among the blankets, she was governing, and she was governing well.

The lover the Regent adored, her Batiushka, her hope, her all, handsome, intelligent Basil Galitzin pursued his high and magnificent design of placing Muscovy on the same level as other states. His were the ideas; hers the boldness to put them into execution. The new government, at the very outset of the reign, determined on a general survey of lands, a most essential measure of reform, seeing that property rights had been ill-established heretofore. The boyars, contented with a slack disorder that allowed them to rob the State, were angry. Furthermore and beyond this, another bold measure was taken: the abolition of internal customs between Great and Little Russia. Hoping to attract the refugees driven from the realm of France by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, Galitzin proclaimed religious freedom, and the equality of all persons, foreigners or native born, before the law. The pair of lovers protected commerce and discovered that close relations with the West were only possible by sea. They took up once more the dream of Ivan the Terrible and Alexis. The Baltic tempted them, but the Swedes held the coast, and were too strong. They noticed that all the main river courses ran down into the Black Sea. What great advantages would accrue from the possession of the mouths of the Don and the Dnieper! Azov must be conquered, and then Crimea of the Tartars. They looked further afield, bending over the map, towards the Mediterranean. An

opportunity arose to try their luck. Cleverly and astutely they pretended indifference when the King of Poland, John Sobieski proposed an alliance against the Turks. He persisted. The Emperor, too, whose Vienna he had just saved, pressed them in his turn. The Regent demanded guarantees in the Ukraine; she wanted to keep definite possession of what she had held ever since the truce of Andrussov. What sacrifices would not the too chivalric Pole make in the cause of Christ! He gave her Kiev, the ancient mother of all Russian cities, the territory of Smolensk and the territory of Severiens as far as the Dnieper. With everything she asked for granted she entered the Holy League, which was to endeavour to drive the infidels out of Europe, joining with Poland and the Republic of Venice, each member engaging not to conclude a separate peace. Vienna applauded, but in Versailles the Great King turned an angry eye towards his disobedient ally at Warsaw.

An extraordinary notion that of Sophia's, to send to the Emperor at the same moment as she sent to the Kings of England, Spain, Denmark and the States of Holland, ambassadors with the mission of engaging Christendom to take up arms against the Mohammedans. But that astute lady knew what she was about. Sheremetev alone, that soldier suddenly transformed into a diplomat, who could not neglect so good a way of pushing himself forward, went to the Emperor with definite and clear-cut instructions, which were to get him to ratify the treaty of alliance. The others had the vaguer mission of endeavouring to establish useful relations with the civilized nations. James Dolgoruky was inflamed with zeal. Already enamoured of western refinements, it was he who was sent to Louis XIV. He hurried on his preparations for the journey, and paid a visit to Peter to take his leave, promising to bring back some unusual present for him from those distant lands.

Poland demanded that the Muscovites should take the field immediately. On September 3, 7194 (1686) there was accordingly published the ukase ordering the mustering of the troops. With typical Muscovite haste, the army started for the Crimea in the following May. Galitzin was in command. He left Moscow much against his will, for he realized that he was far more of a statesman than an experienced commander in the field. It was the treacherous boyars who out of jealousy persuaded him that he was the only leader capable of securing victory. They kept in mind the surveying of estates and other stupid, new-fangled measures, and were making ready to damage him while in his absence. A sound defeat would make them thoroughly happy. Sophia, who for all her political talent was still a woman, saw him in her mind's eye returning covered with glory.

He advanced over those huge dreary steppes which the Greeks of the Euxine believed to be peopled by the shades of the Cimmerians. From the shelter of the two foot high grass peered and disappeared the hairy caps of the renegade Tartars, all snatchers of slaves for the galleys, and defiantly independent of their overlord the Great Khan. Arrows sped from the bows hidden in the brush. The army came quickly to a halt. A monk had talked with the Mother of God, who expressed her astonishment that the generals had not brought a certain icon along with them. The high command was alarmed and sent back for the holy image from the Kremlin. Now more reassured the army set off again after a fortnight's waiting. The Great Khan brought up the Golden Horde dragging along its moving villages every house of which was mounted on a pair of wheels. And now another foe sprang up: *the red cock*. The steppe was ablaze. The flames zigzagged, flared up, dried the streams; the birds fled, the army plunged through a kind of

vegetable lava, choked, died of hunger and thirst. Soon it came to a retreat. Galitzin halted at Bogoroditzkoy, and looking round for someone to blame, accused the hetman of the Cossacks of having raised the accursed fire. He condemned him to exile, beheaded his son, and appointed as his successor Mazeppa, the chief's own secretary, a handsome fellow of great ambition, who had in old days been driven from the court at Warsaw because of his orthodox religion, and who had left his estates in Volhynia through the avenging wrath of a jealous old husband.

The generalissimo, who had been vanquished almost without having fought, was received as a conquering hero by Sophia, who made generous distributions of money to the soldiers. The boyars were not so indulgent; they began to stir. The hesitating ones, who had been sitting on the fence, displayed more interest in Peter. Michael Galitzin, Ivan Buturlin, and other nobles, asked to be enrolled in his pleasure regiments, for there were two of them now, one at Préobrajensky, the other at the neighbouring village of Semienovsky. The name *poteshny* became a title in itself. It was a matter of pride to find it applied to one in official documents.

Sophia was growing uneasy, and tried to keep on the right side of her half-brother, who was suddenly being cultivated by too many discontented nobles. She invited him to be present at a council of State. It was the first time he had been thought of. He went, found himself bored and went back to his soldiers.

In the meantime James Dolgoruky had just come back from his long journey to France and to Spain. He had not shone at Versailles. The courtiers took him for a Turk, constantly made him repeat the name of the Grand Duke, inveighed against this barbarian language nobody understood. The interpreters tore their full-bottomed wigs in their efforts to decipher his crudely

illuminated scrawl whose meaning was still more inept than their outward appearance. Individuals crudely disguised as gentlemen, but whom he took to be of the highest elegance, followed him everywhere, and never took their eyes off his companions' hands. The lieutenant of police was mistrustful for very good reasons. The Muscovites had received with pistol shots His Majesty's envoys who had been sent to remind them of the proprieties. Had they not laid out their silks and their peltries on the square at Saint-Denis, intending to sell them to the shoppers! This queer crew was got rid of as quickly as possible. Once at a distance, Dolgoruky forgot his troubles and his disappointments. He spoke in glowing terms of wonderful interviews, a palace as big as a town, mirrors as tall as houses. At length he disclosed the gift he had promised to bring back. The boyars came up with timid enquiring looks. Peter opened both eyes wider. What was this queer instrument?

"An astrolabe," proudly announced the traveller.

The youth examined it from every side. What was it meant for? Dolgoruky talked haltingly about stars, horizons, measuring. But how was it to be used? The orator hung his embarrassed head. Boris Galitzin proposed to send for Doctor Zacharias. The doctor was equally ignorant how to use this curiosity, but he undertook to find in the *Sloboda* someone learned in these things. Next day he brought up a Dutch joiner who seemed about twenty-five years of age: his name was Franz Timmerman. The young man's masterly explanation dazzled Peter. At once he decided that he would never part with so great a savant, and gave orders to assign him quarters in the castle and as near to his own room as possible. In the same tone of authority, recollecting a word he had just heard, which had struck him, he begged the stranger to reveal to him the beauties of descriptive geometry. When Timmer-

man perceived that His Majesty at fifteen could hardly count as far as ten with the help of his fingers, he preferred to begin his course of instruction with the four elementary rules.

The master had no great erudition. He made mistakes in his additions and felt a disgust very near hate for the noughts that are so bewildering to use. All the same he found some answer for every question. He was enlightened on every subject. He knew geography, cosmography, and the art of fortification almost as well as he knew mathematics. Peter listened to him with the greatest respect, and followed his advice in everything. He wished for a wooden ball with the continents and seas marked upon it. The Kremlin sent the terrestrial globe along with a monkey, a Kalmuck saddle and a treatise on artillery. Timmerman was setting up school.

The two young men were inseparable. They went from village to village, accompanied by three hundred *poteshny*. Everywhere they discovered wonders and marvels.

On one occasion, at Woskresenskoy, a big Scotsman with a short peruke and red cheeks, General Patrick Gordon, who was there with his regiment, let off fireworks in honour of the monarch. " Again! Again! " cried the Czar whose eyes had never known such a treat. He gave orders to see to it that this pleasure should be frequently repeated. And the very next day he was messing about with gunpowder in a kind of laboratory.

Another day, at Ismaïlov, the master and his pupil saw, tucked away in an outhouse, a boat with a keel rotting and half destroyed. This vessel might well astonish the ruler of a country where the only aids to navigation were rafts of tree trunks or dugouts. He questioned the villagers. The elders remembered having seen it beating about with sails.

" Have it put into the water at once! " ordered Peter.

Timmerman, feeling anything but comfortable, made ex-

cuses. Let His Majesty not be offended. He would look for a sailor among his fellow-countrymen in the *Sloboda.*

Two days after, a poor old carpenter, Brandt by name, presented himself at the Palace.

" Can you take me in a ship with sails that can go against the wind? " asked the Czar.

Brandt could do more than that. He knew the art and craft of repairing and building ships. That was why the late Czar Alexis of happy memory had brought him and a dozen more from Holland to Muscovy. He mentioned Botheler, dead by this time, Kort who lived by the Lutheran Church. He was sorry he had forgotten certain names . . . but lord! all that went back twenty years now. They had launched in those days two great ships carrying twenty-two guns. One was called the *Eagle,* and was commanded by an Englishman named Butler. Where were they now? The men? No, the ships? They were gone. Those devils, the Cossacks of Astrakhan, had burned them during their revolt, and the late Czar Alexis had lost his taste for ships. As nobody took any notice of the shipyard workers now, they had gone to Moscow. Betaking themselves to God, your Majesty. They had found work. As for himself, he managed to live, had no complaint to make.

" Where is this boat? "

Brandt was taken on to Ismaïlov. The expert declared that the boat was English made. The old boyars were consulted, and some maintained that it was a gift from Queen Elizabeth to Ivan the Terrible, the others, in the teeth of all likelihood, were equally positive that it had been built at Dedinovo in the days of Alexis. They were agreed on one point: it had belonged to a cousin of the Czar Michael, Prince Nikita Ivanovitch Romanov, an eccentric who dressed like a Frenchman; for which the Patriarch had suitably reproved him.

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The two young men were inseparable. They went from village to village, accompanied by three hundred *poteshny*. Everywhere they discovered wonders and marvels.

On one occasion, at Woskresenskoy, a big Scotsman with a short peruke and red cheeks, General Patrick Gordon, who was there with his regiment, let off fireworks in honour of the monarch. " Again! Again! " cried the Czar whose eyes had never known such a treat. He gave orders to see to it that this pleasure should be frequently repeated. And the very next day he was messing about with gunpowder in a kind of laboratory.

Another day, at Ismaïlov, the master and his pupil saw, tucked away in an outhouse, a boat with a keel rotting and half destroyed. This vessel might well astonish the ruler of a country where the only aids to navigation were rafts of tree trunks or dugouts. He questioned the villagers. The elders remembered having seen it beating about with sails.

" Have it put into the water at once! " ordered Peter.

Timmerman, feeling anything but comfortable, made ex-

cuses. Let His Majesty not be offended. He would look for a sailor among his fellow-countrymen in the *Sloboda.*

Two days after, a poor old carpenter, Brandt by name, presented himself at the Palace.

"Can you take me in a ship with sails that can go against the wind?" asked the Czar.

Brandt could do more than that. He knew the art and craft of repairing and building ships. That was why the late Czar Alexis of happy memory had brought him and a dozen more from Holland to Muscovy. He mentioned Botheler, dead by this time, Kort who lived by the Lutheran Church. He was sorry he had forgotten certain names . . . but lord! all that went back twenty years now. They had launched in those days two great ships carrying twenty-two guns. One was called the *Eagle,* and was commanded by an Englishman named Butler. Where were they now? The men? No, the ships? They were gone. Those devils, the Cossacks of Astrakhan, had burned them during their revolt, and the late Czar Alexis had lost his taste for ships. As nobody took any notice of the shipyard workers now, they had gone to Moscow. Betaking themselves to God, your Majesty. They had found work. As for himself, he managed to live, had no complaint to make.

"Where is this boat?"

Brandt was taken on to Ismaïlov. The expert declared that the boat was English made. The old boyars were consulted, and some maintained that it was a gift from Queen Elizabeth to Ivan the Terrible, the others, in the teeth of all likelihood, were equally positive that it had been built at Dedinovo in the days of Alexis. They were agreed on one point: it had belonged to a cousin of the Czar Michael, Prince Nikita Ivanovitch Romanov, an eccentric who dressed like a Frenchman; for which the Patriarch had suitably reproved him.

the high esteem of all Europe. He agreed with no great enthusiasm.

On January 23rd, 7180 (1689), Basil Galitzin set out with a mind full of apprehension, for the assembling quarters of the army. The previous night he had found, at the door of his palace, a closed coffin in which there was this note: "If the campaign you are about to open is not more successful than the last, here is what you cannot escape."

The night of this sad separation an incredible rumour came to the Regent's ears. Peter, it was whispered, was on the point of taking to himself a wife. Who was to be the bride? Doubtless the sister of one of his grooms. She was wrong, for he had not made the choice himself. Marriage hardly ever entered his head. It was the time of Carnival and the wildest orgies. It would have pleased him better to indulge in boisterous drunken bouts with his jolly *poteshny*. Natalia, guided by Boris Galitzin, who had a passion for subtle policies as well as for wine, had a less sprightly point of view in the matter. It was becoming urgent to have an heir to counter Sophia's dark and tortuous projects; as the Italian surgeon, zealous though he was, had not succeeded in giving Ivan a single male child. Peter yielded, sullenly, to these tiresome arguments. Very well! he consented. But if he did, let them show him the girl, send for Mercure his chaplain confessor, and let no more be said about it. This haste in no way displeased his mother, who was happy to present to him the very beautiful girl endowed with a wealth of piety and good sense whom she wished to have for a daughter-in-law. Eudoxia was twenty, just three years older than Peter, and had been living in the Czarina's suite for a long time. She was one of the daughters of that Lapuhin who after Feodor's death had been sent to meet Matveiev. Peter examined her, thought her old, but didn't back out.

The marriage blessing was not given in the Cathedral, as the custom was. The ceremony took place in some secrecy, on January 28th, in the Palace itself, in the little church of the Apostles Peter and Paul.

Dazzling Eudoxia with her bright red and white colouring gazed ecstatically on her bridegroom's colossal stature and his haughty eyes that could hardly refrain that morning from flashing lightnings. His new coat was a nuisance. Indeed, a man never feels at ease in anything but old clothes covered with stains.

This ill-controlled impatience had unfortunate results. Three days later a violent attack of his peculiar spasm drove him to take to his bed. He was soon up again; the rejoicings were not interrupted; and the dead-drunk *poteshny* saw him back among them immediately, escorted by his buffoons and his favourite dwarfs, the hardest drinker in the band.

Already for several weeks people had given up the melted butter that in Muscovy takes the place of meat during carnival, when Basil Galitzin came back from the army, satisfied with the plans and arrangements decided upon. About mid-April he was setting out again to join the troops on the march towards the Crimea. The Patriarch, the Czars and their families accompanied him as far as the Saint-Nicholas gate. The next day Peter sped away to the lake of Pereïaslavl, eager to know how the building of his ships was proceeding.

Brandt and Kort had almost finished two. He praised them, hugged them, took off his caftan, tucked up his sleeves and seized a hammer. " The work would go better with three of us, eh mates? "

They hammered, sang, drank vodka.

" After you, Your Majesty," said the old men politely.

"You drink first," ordered the Czar. "I'm only an apprentice."

The bride, thus deserted in the middle of the honeymoon, wept and bemoaned. She implored *the light of her life to* come back to her. He shrugged his shoulders, stuffed the love note into his boot, and turned again to dipping into the heap of nails.

His absence went on for too long. Natalia grew angry. Surely he would not go so far as to absent himself from the annual memorial service for Feodor's death, at the end of the month? He answered with profound respect that he would not budge. Kort had fallen sick and he had to work for two now. Let the people back there think a little more of serious matters! He was still waiting for the cable he had ordered from uncle Leo, who was one of the Czarina's remaining brothers. Instead of the cable he saw Tiphon Streshniev arrive in person. Natalia's friend had definite orders: to bring him back willy-nilly.

He did not dare to disobey his mother any longer.

But before going back, he insisted on attending to the graveyard the corpse of old Kort who had died a night or two earlier.

At last the journey was begun. When Peter reached Préobrajensky, Natalia cried out to him: "You are of age!"

It was May 30th, his birthday; he was just seventeen.

Eudoxia came to him, all delight. He gave her a quick kiss and hurried off to drink with his *poteshny*.

CHAPTER FOUR

PETER'S partisans had been disconsolate over the good news that came from the army. Basil Galitzin was before Perekop and seemed certain to carry it. But dreadful adverse rumours speedily reassured them.

The generalissimo had fallen into the worst kind of trap. He had been obliged to agree to discuss terms of an armistice with the envoys of the Great Khan. The negotiations dragged on so long that the Muscovites began to run short of victuals and of forage. Then the Tartars raised their heads again and demanded tribute for their master. Naturally this was refused. But the army had been forced to take flight bowed with shame and dying of hunger. It was all the astute negotiators had hoped for.

And now across the steppes the troops were retreating to the capital, in disorder, famine-pinched, without horses, without guns, almost without weapons.

When at the end of June, Galitzin appeared in Moscow, the populace received him with hootings. "Traitor! Traitor!" they yelled. For every one of them felt certain that among the general's baggage were hidden the kegs of gold the Great Khan had given him.

In the Palace the defeated man dropped into the thick of complicated and squalid intrigues. During his absence Sophia had been unfaithful to him with Schaklovityi, the head of the *Streltsy* Office, an ambitious young fellow ready for anything. The betrayal was less bitter to the lover befooled than the wretched defence put forward by the unfaithful lady. But it was in their mutual interest that she had pretended a *tendresse* for the other! Would they not very soon have need of his soldiers? She was resolved to act, spoke again of committing one or two fratricides! He answered, completely without illusion,

" What good would it do! " The game was too obviously lost. It would be more to the point to think of their retreat. He was proposing to send his son Alexis, under the pretext of an embassy, into Poland with the greater part of his wealth. With their ally they would later find refuge if they met with a final reverse. To manage to fly in safety was becoming the only hope he had left. True, seven years earlier he had dreamed of great things. Today he confessed his mistake. This nation could never be civilized. How many boyars could be counted over who did not cling to the ancient customs? What was it Peter's supporters were secretly claiming? The suppression of the few reforms that had been carried out. So let them go on wallowing in their disastrous barbarism! Sophia saw that he was right. Well then, in future they would go with the stream. The essential thing was to keep the government in their hands. He did not think so. And anyway, he preferred not to think any more.

While Basil was throwing up the sponge like this, his cousin Boris was plotting a most ingenious *coup d'état.*

Very few persons were in the secret. Natalia was the only one who knew everything, and Peter the only one who knew nothing. It did not escape his mother nor his governor that the young Czar displayed no desire for power. Contrary to all expectation, marriage had not altered him. How was he to be forced to play his proper part?

Boris undertook to repeat to him at every opportunity that his sister wanted to kill him and that he ought to be well on his guard against her. Let him remember the revolt of the *Streltsy!*

Slowly the boy's ancient hatred revived within him; it had always been there, but in a sense inactive since the death of Miloslavsky. No doubt he felt it stirring a little every time he thought of the Kremlin, its dark corridors, those heavy gold

robes. But his mind was not sufficiently developed for him to hate things as strongly as a particular person.

" Sophia! Sophia! Sophia! " repeated the governor untiringly.

He gave an engraved portrait of the Regent, crown on head and holding in her hand the sceptre and the globe. He made him read the verses inscribed beneath, written by the monk Medviediev, which likened her to Semiramis. This picture, Boris hinted, was circulating throughout Europe, it was being distributed in Moscow. In short, Sophia was behaving as if she had killed him already.

This was not the first time he had heard the same sort of thing. But his mind was then little able to conceive what now his eyes saw for themselves. He became indignant; he grew angrier and angrier. The hatred repressed in the olden days, which without his knowing had grown as he grew himself, revived in fury. His open jaws would have gladly bitten the treacherous face of Sophia, which mocked him with the same expressions as the savage face of Miloslavsky.

His litter, at once! He hurried away to the Kremlin, shouted, banged on tables. A man of his age would not allow himself to be under a woman's thumb! And he came back more lowering, more furious, like the irritated wild beast whose tamer has been cunning to avoid the stroke of his awkward paw.

At Préobrajensky it was necessary to fan and to appease, constantly and in turn, that rage, which knew so little of policy. It broke out publicly on July 18th, on the occasion of the procession held on that day to commemorate the taking of Kazan.

Peter went brutally up to his sister and said:

" This is not your place. Go away. The period of your regency is at an end."

She disdained to obey. Thereupon he left the Church of

Ivan the Great, uttering a mouthful of threats, and followed by his wife, his family and his adherents.

Sophia replied to this insolence with defiance, by announcing a distribution of rewards to the officially victorious generals and troops.

On July 24th, Peter, who had already refused to receive Basil Galitzin, declared that he was opposed to any grant. Boris begged him to revoke this harsh decision. A sleeping enemy is less dangerous than an enemy awake. On the 27th, they cleverly forced him to go back on it.

And on August 7th, there began the greatest " night of fools " ever known in history.

The Regent had made all arrangements to go next day to the monastery of Diewitchy, as was her custom every year at this time, and had given Shaklovityi orders to send her an escort of a hundred men at daybreak.

Sophia was sitting down to the table when she received an anonymous letter, the author of which was known to Boris Galitzin at any rate, which warned her that the *poteshny* were making ready to attack the Palace, about midnight, intending to kill Ivan and his sisters.

She immediately summoned her secondary lover and bade him assemble the escort already arranged at the Kremlin without a moment's delay, and to send out a squad of horsemen towards Préobrajensky to observe the movements of the enemy.

Two *Streltsy* Elizariev and Melnov, were already in the village. Boris, who was waiting for them feverishly, brought them to the Czar's bedroom. Peter opened his eyes in terror.

Who were these people? What did they want? The governor replied for them. They came in hot haste from Moscow with hideous news. His big sister had just decided to do away with

him. The murderers were on their way. He must fly! The young man bolted in his shirt, barefooted, ran to the stables, leapt on his horse.

A wild impulse swept him on. But mastered by terror he had no idea where he was going.

"To the Troïtsa!" Boris breathed in his ear.

They would bring his clothes to him in that little wood yonder. And he would find an escort there.

Spurring, pushing his horse to exhaustion, he galloped sixty versts through the night, arriving at the monastery worn out in body and spirit at the hour when the stars have just disappeared. The Archimandrite Vincent, who might seemingly have been forewarned, had the monks carry him in and lay him in his own bed. He continued to whimper, his face flooded with tears. He was brought to himself again; he could speak. He implored them to take care of him, to protect him. Old Vincent reassured him — in that holy spot the Czar had nothing to fear.

The Regent had risen early and at the end of the mass had declared to the *Streltsy* of her escort assembled before the church:

"If I had not taken my precautions, the Préobrajensky grooms would have murdered us all last night."

Then giving every man a rouble, she had gone quietly back to the Palace.

Not till the end of the forenoon did she hear of Peter's flight. At first she paid little heed to it. But when she knew that the *Streltsy* of the Suharev regiment were already rallying to her brother, and that the *poteshny* had been seen dragging cannon through the woods, she took a more serious view of the affair.

In the other camp, the young Czar had at last recovered his

spirits. In the early afternoon his mother, his sister Natalia and his wife had come to join him. Poor Eudoxia, now pregnant, displayed a woebegone bewildered face. She had had to be helped from her carriage. Next appeared Ivan Buturlin, one of the most active officers of the pleasure regiments, and Boris Galitzin who had halted at Moscow to pay his cousin a visit. Basil, very much dejected and beaten, would most certainly not put up a fight. The soldiers were now filling the courts.

At this point a boyar was sent to Sophia instructed to ask the reason for the mustering of troops in the night. She replied that there had been in the Kremlin only the escort that was to accompany her that day to Diewitchy. Men were seen prowling round Préobrajensky? They might just have been the *Streltsy* of the reliefs.

The Regent took the offensive in her turn. She desired Prince Troekurov to go and insist on Peter coming back to Moscow. He went, and was greeted with two fiery eyes and a voice of thunder.

The daunted coward that had been lifted down from his horse the other morning had turned into a raging lion. These quick changes were common with him. Instinct was still his master. He had not for a moment considered the serious consequences of what he was now doing. His partisans wished to overthrow Sophia so as to get the power into their own hands. It was to satisfy his hate that he wanted to send his big sister packing. In the fever of the moment when everyone thought only of the next object to be achieved, the boyars could not be blamed for being taken in. He had the air and voice of a leader. The force that dwelt in him broke out tumultuously; he seemed almost to be master of the game. How vigorously, with what fire, he replied to Troekurov. A man of his age — this lad of seventeen had the expression in his mouth all the

time — could not consent to be managed by a woman. Let the Regent go back to her convent as quickly as possible. If she did not obey, she should be dealt with drastically.

"To the cloisters! To the cloisters with her!"

And that was the shout the *Raskolniky* were uttering at that very moment, massing once more at the foot of the Red Staircase, with old scores to settle with her, too.

The same riot as before was beginning again, made up of the same elements with slightly different grouping.

Thus along by the wall of the Troïtsa there marched side by side that day Peter and Tsykler, Miloslavsky's old accomplice, one of the earliest to desert Sophia's cause. He inflamed the Czar against the princess. What crimes she would have committed but for his wholesome intervention! He enumerated them in sepulchral tones and certainly added to them.

It was Boris Galitzin who drew up the message that on August 16th ordered every regiment to despatch ten men to the monastery. But Peter signed it with a rejoicing pen. All the *Streltsy* whose pikes he had once upon a time seen ranged on the other side of the Palace windows, he was fain to have with him. It was her turn to be afraid now.

Sophia was not trembling so very much. She forbade the soldiers to present themselves in response to the rebel's invitation. It would be unseemly for them to take part in this painful quarrel between brother and sister. And in any case the message was a forgery. If any of them doubted this she would cut off their heads. Finally she gave orders to arrest Peter's emissaries at the gates and bring them under good guard to the Palace.

Shaklovityi warned her that in spite of everything desertions by night were increasing many times over. Suppose she were to try plaints instead of fighting! She asked his aunts Tatiana and

Anna to try to bring their nephew back to a better frame of mind. She loved the young Czar so dearly; they were such good friends only the other day; this was a dreadful misunderstanding! The two old sisters of Alexis went, but did not return. That disturbed her, frightened her. She applied to the Patriarch. Joachim was looking for some excuse for going to the Troïtsa. He accepted the mission most zealously, listened to her most devoutly. And once he got there it was to uphold Peter. He harangued the troops and the boyars, and enjoined upon them to remain unshakably staunch to the Czar, and even to march on Moscow.

The young man became arrogant. He insisted on having Shaklovityi and Medviediev handed over to him. This time he was acting on his own initiative. The chief of the *Streltsy* was the person, so Tsykler had told him, who was to murder him. The monk was the author of the stupid verses that compared his big sister to Semiramis.

Sophia indignantly had the bearer of this insolent letter cut down. She was already losing her head a little.

Now it was Boris' turn to intervene. All the regiments were ordered to present themselves at the monastery. All who disobeyed this last and final order would be put to death.

The quarters of the troops hummed with movement; the last hesitaters among the boyars made haste to order out their litters. The deserted Regent called for help. Basil, who found all this agitation most disagreeable and who had been resting in the country, made polite haste to appear. She urged him to act. They must, said his distracted mistress, go together to the Troïtsa. He consented, without much eagerness, touched by her distress.

The *poteshny* halted the party at Vosdvijenskoie. This was the very place where seven years ago Prince Hovansky had

been waylaid and murdered. The soldiers harshly bade her go back where she came from.

She held her head high and flung at them:

"I shall go on my way all the same."

Ten versts from the monastery Buturlin repeated his master's orders to her and pointed a finger to the muskets of his men. She insisted no further. On August 31st, she re-entered Moscow by night.

Next day, being the first of the year, she spoke from the top of the Red Staircase. Eloquently she recounted the services she had rendered to the country, the glorious treaties she had signed. All that meant nothing to the rude grooms of Préobrajensky. Yesterday they had levelled muskets at her in the highway. To such lengths had the wicked folk, then misleading Peter, gone in their audacity. Let the *Streltsy* swear upon the Holy Cross to remain faithful to her. The wine in the cellars was theirs.

Thirst egged them on to take the oath.

The foreign officers had greater delicacy. These late happenings had put their brains on the rack. It was their duty to serve the government. Where was the government today? Everyone in the *Sloboda* pelted General Patrick Gordon, who enjoyed the high esteem of all, with questions. The Scot was embarrassed. He was very fond of Czar Peter, so keen a lover of fireworks. But he was also the friend of Basil and the Regent. Yet on the other hand, Boris came and drank in his house. Secretly he wished the devil had these turbulent Muscovites who were incapable of staying quiet. He must take one side or the other. He decided, on the evening of September 1st, to go and ask the first minister for advice. He took his son-in-law, Colonel Strasburger, with him to the Palace, and left him in a hack at the door to wait for him.

Basil Galitzin helped him to very little enlightenment. He himself did not know how to act. For several days his cousin had been urging him to make his submission. But the same regard for honour that Sophia had lately reproached him with prevented him from abandoning her. The Scotsman wagged his head. At any other moment these confidences would have excited him tremendously. But he had put himself out for something quite different. Ought he to stay? Ought he to join the younger Czar? It might be a matter of life or death for him. Basil did not tell him to go. Neither did he bid him stay. He would rather think it over.

Gordon, who had now made up his mind, took leave of him very ceremoniously and for ever.

"Well?" asked Strasburger from the depths of the hack.

"We must move off and this very night, too."

The two foreigners arrived at the Troïtsa next day about noon. The Czar was at dinner. He left the table and went down the stone steps of the outer stair. The fireworks man was bringing him his whole regiment. He was the first to desert to him in a body.

"Patrick Ivanovitch!" cried Peter joyfully raising his hand in salute.

What was left now to Sophia? A few thousand *Streltsy* whose oath would not trouble them very long. On September 6th, in fact, they invaded the Kremlin, and just as they had once upon a time demanded the heads of the Narishkins for the Czarevna so they now insisted that Shaklovityi should be handed over for them to surrender him to the young Czar in token of submission. The Regent gave way, finally beaten.

Peter made haste to write to Ivan. Without forgetting once again to mention men of their age, he denounced that woman's crimes, and assured his brother that he would never withdraw

any of his rights and would always respect his claim to precedence. After which he cavalierly asked him to find out from their sister in what convent she would prefer to be shut away. For that he had made up his mind to. He had already published the ukase ordering the suppression of Sophia's name in edicts. He wished also that the engraving in which she was represented wearing the crown should be burned.

This was the very day on which Basil Galitzin and the last ministers of the deceased government reached the Troïtsa. They were denied admission. Humbly they went off to find a lodging in a neighbouring village. When on September 9th, the old favourite was summoned to the monastery, he could hardly elbow his way through the mob. Someone was holding forth with noisy eloquence. Basil turned round and recognized Peter Tolstoy.

The Czar showed no ultra severity against Galitzin, on whose behalf Boris had managed to plead. He simply exiled him to the shore of the Frozen Sea, to Kargopol, with one rouble a day for himself and his family. He even pardoned several enemies of his party. But his own personal enemies, Shaklovityi and Medviediev, were condemned to death.

His Majesty waited until Sophia had taken the veil, under the name of Sister Susanna, in the convent of Novodevitch to return and enter his capital on horseback.

Ivan welcomed him at the top of the Red Staircase, and the two brothers embraced affectionately.

Peter had won the day, and wanted nothing. Victory had already satisfied this individual who regarded everything in its relation to himself; he had just avenged his childhood.

PART TWO

CHAPTER ONE

PETER was now residing in the Kremlin. But in Moscow, as at Préobrajensky, he continued utterly indifferent to affairs of State. He was, or fancied himself, the complete soldier, carpenter, wood-turner and just lately, fireworks-maker; he had no time to ply the trade of Czar as well.

It was the Narishkins — at any rate what was left of them, dear Tiphon Streshniev, the Romodanovskys, the Dolgorukys, the Sheremetevs, the Urussovs, who carried on the government as they pleased. Whether they decreed an inquiry upon the conduct of the late campaigns in the Crimea, or whether, in order the better to keep watch over their enemies the foreigners, they increased to an exaggerated extent the powers of the secret Chancery set up by Alexis and now presided over by a Romodanovsky, he never even noticed it.

One day, however, he stood up and roared. He had observed that Boris Galitzin stayed a very long time in the country, and perceived that the other boyars were keeping the over-zealous defender of Basil at a distance. He enjoined upon him to come back, and sent courier after courier to him. The subtle-minded drunkard turned a deaf ear; he mistrusted the fleeting impulses of his former protégé now become his protector. Two very urgent envoys reassured him, and he consented to return to the capital.

It disturbed Peter not at all that his uncle, the incapable Leo Narishkin, guided luckily in secret by an obscure but first rate subordinate, Ukrainsev, was at the head of the Ambassador's Office. But he would not endure that he himself should suffer injury in the person of a man who had thrice saved his life. When he recalled that night of August 7th, peopled as we know with murders all round Préobrajensky, his memories saw treble.

In January, he was to banish Andrew Ivanovitch Galitzin, guilty of having treated him, among friends and trusting fallaciously to appearances, as a mere fool. Not that he had any very exalted opinion of himself; he was even at that moment rather modest. But he had an insatiable need for independence. He suffered himself to be contradicted or blamed no more than he allowed anyone to prevent him from living as he pleased. He could submit to no sort or kind of restraint.

Old Brandt and the incomparable Timmerman were still his two faithful companions. The sovereign's suite, into which Menzies, back from Smolensk with grandfather Cyril Narishkin, never managed to work his way, was increased by Zotov, the one-time tutor. The pupil treated his old master as familiarly as his dwarfs and his buffoons, sparing him neither embraces nor slaps in the face nor kicks behind. He was a hearty drinker, and therefore a friend. He had him appointed *djak* of the Duma, and presently entrusted him with the Chancery of his regiments. The *poteshny* now numbered nearly a thousand men.

But for the time being his one passion was fireworks. Naturally he let them off himself, unfortunately for certain gaping onlookers who were killed. Colonel Strasburger and Timmerman, who of course must needs be there, were luckier and got off with severe burns. Patrick Gordon was the organizer of these marvellous diversions. Peter and he had become inseparable companions.

The general was fifty-five years of age, and belonged to an illustrious family. He was a cousin of the Duke of Gordon and related to the Earl of Errol and the Earl of Aberdeen. Charles II knew him well. He was in correspondence with Lord Melfort, the ambassador at the court of Rome, and with the Jesuits of Vienna. The Scots colony of the *Sloboda,* which

was royalist and Roman Catholic, looked upon him as its chief. None the less he was a real Dugald Dalgety. Once he had ended his studies at Aberdeen and Douai he set off for Posen and Hamburg. He hired out his sword to the Swedes and to the Poles in Lithuania, fought against both and even against the Muscovites. He was on the point of taking service with the Emperor, but, as the negotiations dragged on too long, he went off to Moscow. Alexis and Sophia had entrusted him with commercial missions to England. He thought that his services might have been more substantially rewarded. In Peter's eyes this big, jovial fellow possessed two inestimable qualities: he was undaunted at table and he spoke Slavonic.

So from January on they were always together. On the 11th and the 16th, Gordon dined in the Kremlin. On the 19th, laden with fireworks, he went into the country with the monarch to the house of a boyar who gave them so sumptuous a banquet that everybody was ill after it. On the 21st and the 22nd he dined again in the Kremlin. On the 24th, as he had been to a funeral in the forenoon, he could not go to the Palace. Etiquette forbade anyone to present himself before the Czar for three days after coming in contact with the dead. On the 31st, Peter exempted wine and every other commodity going to his friend from all customs duties. On February 4th and 5th, they had long conversations together. On the 23rd, the general offered his master his congratulations on the birth of his first child.

On February 19, 7198 (1690), at four o'clock in the morning, Eudoxia gave birth to a boy, who was given the Christian name of Alexis after his grandfather. Natalia shed tears of delight. The father shouted for joy. All must drink brandy to heighten the glee, there must be public rejoicings, and above all, no stint of fireworks.

He tucked up his sleeves and set fire to the powder. The prudent bystanders fell back in fright. How heartily Peter laughed. He had a son. A son! That good Eudoxia was an excellent creature after all. There had been days when he never gave her a thought. Now in repentant mood he hugged and kissed her, and to show his graciousness, he twisted her wrists hard, while she meekly suppressed any desire to cry out.

Meanwhile the Patriarch saw with an eye of severity that heathen Gordon installed almost as a housemate of the Czar. On February 28th, Joachim forbade the foreigner to dine in the Kremlin.

Peter did not dare to disobey the pontiff's order. But the very next day was spent in the country with the general. On the way they spoke of hunting.

"My father loved it," said the monarch. "I loath it. It is a useless pursuit, like cards, which are a sport for cheats. I don't see how anyone can bear to waste his time in playing. I never do myself. The one thing I love is work. We ought to have some fireworks tonight."

He did not conceal from his friend that the fool of a Patriarch had made him angry.

The holy man was not to vex him much longer. On March 27th, Joachim died, leaving him a last testament, which the young man made haste to read. The dead Patriarch recommended his Czar to eschew the company of heretics, Lutherans, Calvinists and Catholics, not to introduce into All the Russias their guilty ways, to banish them from the country and to destroy their churches. Were there any members of the Orthodox faith in Germany or in England?

Peter paid good and due heed to the worthy man. On April 30th, Peter did not invite Gordon to the Palace — he went and

dined with him at his house. On that day he crossed for the first time the borderline of the accursed foreign quarter.

What struck him immediately was the comparitive cleanness of the *Sloboda.* Most of the houses were made of bricks, and had pretty gardens in front. And in the squares, planted with trees, there were fountains playing.

The village had been founded by Wallenstein's troopers driven back from the holy city, and by the English who were the first to appear at Archangel after their discovery of the White Sea. After the imprisonment of Charles I, three thousand Scotsmen had taken up their abode there. Among them were some of as good birth as Gordon — Drummonds, Dalziels, Crawfurds, Hamiltons, Grahams, Boekhovens, all ardent Jacobites and all officers in the Czar's armies. Even though they were more often paid in furs than in money they still held the first rank in the *Sloboda.*

The second rank comprised merchants from Hamburg and Bremen, Dutch and Danish traders, and doctors, apothecaries, schoolmasters, artisans, most of whom were German. But there were also a good number of Protestant refugees from France and Italy.

It was an extraordinary mixture of people of weight, honest workers, and adventurers of every kind. There were even actors and people with schemes to sell like the Saxon Reinhalder, a medical student and tutor, who had once been Menzies' secretary in Rome, and who long ago had suggested to Matveiev reforming Muscovy before going and trying to dazzle the court of Louis XIV. He preached the need of introducing frequent drill into the army, as well as strict discipline and regular pay; advocated the capturing of the Orient trade from the Dutch, the English and the Portuguese by diverting it to Kazan and Siberia; urged the dispatching of an embassy to China to settle

the frontier between the two States, and suggested sending the young Muscovites to learn the arts and sciences in the West.

All these foreigners, who had been prohibited by the Patriarch from wearing the caftan ever since they had displayed some irreverence at the processions, were subjected to the surveillance of a special magistrate. The *Posoldy-Prikas* was often kept busy. The general morals of the *Sloboda* were far from high, and there were continual intrigues and rivalries actively on foot. The Lutherans, having first been embroiled with the Calvinists, subsequently made it up with them to fall jointly upon the Jacobites. Each party ranged itself behind the English, Danish, Swedish or Dutch Residents respectively. The last, Van Keller, was the most highly respected of all. From Amsterdam he brought instruments, bales of books, and even dresses for the ladies, who were enchanted to be able in this way to have the latest fashions.

The weekly coming of the European mail was a great joy to the foreigners. Faithful to their national habits, entertainments made a break in their work, accompanied marriages and baptisms. Everybody made merry for three days on end, all feuds forgotten. Sedate Germans smoked their long pipes in company with the Dutch and acted plays. Italians sang operas. Masquerades were got up, the " grandfather's dance " was danced. Flagons were emptied as speedily as they were filled, and the women became far from austere. Never had Peter as yet mingled with society so distinguished. That first dinner at Gordon's house filled him with wonder and amazement.

Why did the guests not blow their noses in the tablecloth, and throw back the bones they had just gnawed into the dish, as they did in the Palace? At any rate he could see why they were regarded as heathens. Their souls had but little impulse

towards God and seldom longed to converse with Our Lord, since they hardly ever vented wind either up or down.

He literally licked his fingers. That stew, as they called it, was marvellous. He called for wine, and wine again, since here a man might drink from one end of a meal to the other. That was better than mead and the sour *kvass,* a fattening drink.

The musicians came forward, to give His Majesty, whose shyness had dropped away from him, another form of entertainment. Always inquisitive, he leaned over the open bodices of the women. Dazzled, he stroked their bosoms. Pouting faces revealed to him that they did not appreciate his manners. He would show them he could be more discreet in his gallantries. He touched their backs, their hips. What firm flesh these foreign women have, he thought, as his nails turned against the whalebone of their corsets.

There was laughter, and singing, and then they danced.

Peter opened wide eyes and stroked his close-clipped cranium. He saw blond and black wigs and flowered taffeta dresses sweeping by.

Quand le grand-père prit la grand'mère hummed the excited couples. He applauded, he loved the tune; he would like to have a turn himself. The ladies were amiably willing. He trod on their feet, he smacked their lovely shoulders. They all compelled themselves to go on smiling. Never had he enjoyed himself so much.

"Patrick Ivanovitch, another glass of wine."

The Czar in the *Sloboda!* What a scandal! He was taking his first dancing lesson while the faithful Orthodox were still weeping for the dead Patriarch.

The boyars displayed severe faces, the foreigners wore looks of contentment. They hoped — it would be miraculous! —

their arrears of pay would be given them. Van Keller, an adroit politician, invited His Majesty in his turn. Budenant, the Danish envoy, did likewise. Peter went to the houses of all the Residents. These people had really good cellars.

" Wine! Wine! " he clamoured.

While others saw him getting drunk, the sovereign was pondering within upon a serious affair of State. The election of Joachim's successor was troubling him. It would be a great nuisance if next day some numskull were to come and plant the Holy Cross under his nose and forbid him to visit the *Sloboda,* so delightfully full of barrels and fine women. So he supported Marcellus, the Metropolitan of Pskov, who he was told was intelligent. His mother, that idiot Ivan and the bulk of the clergy had another candidate; Adrian, the Metropolitan of Kazan.

The council had been deliberating for five and twenty days, when on July 24th, Peter bethought him of his boats and set out for the Troïtsa with Gordon and Boris Galitzin. The journey — had they perhaps drunk too much on the way? — was bad for the general. Violent colic forced him to take to his bed next day. The Czar sat with him for five hours, and sent to fetch his own doctor. Poor Patrick panted and sweated in great drops and his cheeks shook. Peter wasted no pity on his old friend, for it could do him no good; but he regretted that he knew nothing about medicine.

About the middle of August, he came back to Moscow. The election took place on the 23rd, and Adrian carried it.

The sovereign flew into a rage. He must know why his protégé had not been appointed! Such a choice, he was told, would have been sacrilegious. Marcellus was too perilously erudite. He spoke barbarian tongues: Latin, French, Italian. Neither did he conform to honest ways: he made his coachman sit on

the box and not on the horses. And his beard was not big enough.

A thundering peal of laughter smote the speaker. But beneath this youthful merriment anger was on the boil. Peter immediately adopted a formidable decision. The Patriarch would please for the future confine his attention to the Church and give no more directions for the Czar's conduct. The young man was impulsive, but he was also a *visualist*. An act existed for him only if his mind could represent it to him already in being in the form of a picture. Accordingly he declared that he would no longer agree to lead the pontiff's donkey by the bridle on Palm Sunday, as his predecessors and himself had done too long already. His dignity forbade it; he was not groom to God's representative on earth. Thus without reflecting — he never reflected — and without realizing what he did, he embarked for a merely personal reason upon a terrible struggle with the patriarchate.

Adrian, shocked and offended, already felt himself the storm centre of the opposition that could not but spring up, and instead of installing himself in Moscow he stayed in the monastery of Pererwinsky.

"Very well, let him stop there," cried Peter.

For he is obstinate too.

Furthermore he wants to get away from the Kremlin. Too many faces in the Palace register disapproval of his behaviour. Never will he be the Czar of their dreams, like a living icon in his golden robes. He likes only coarse woollen clothes, and to be more at ease wears a much shortened caftan. No longer will they make him go about in pomp and circumstance with a train of useless servants, one carrying his handkerchief, another his chair, a third his towel, a fourth his cushion, and yet another his parasol. To the devil with

the whole crew of them! He is not afraid the sun will burn his coppery skin, and he sticks his handkerchief in his hat like everybody else. If his fingers are dirty he wipes them on his breeches, and when he wants to sit down he finds the ground neither too low nor too hard for him.

He was determined to leave the Kremlin; he was being morally stifled in it. He therefore gave orders to build him a house to the barracks where his beloved *poteshny* were lodged, five versts from the pleasure house of Préobrajensky, in other words as near the *Sloboda* as possible, for he intended to visit it more and more often. He would only take with him a single *valet de chambre* and a single liveried footman. That would be all he wanted. But when there he lived in the midst of a group of people of intelligence: Gordon, Timmerman, Brandt, Zotov, his four-and-twenty dwarfs and his dozen fools, the best of whom were Turgeniev and Lenin. At intervals he went back to the Palace to dine with his mother and to sleep with his wife. Of which two things the latter meant least to him.

On August 27th, he celebrated the dawn of his new freedom with a prodigious expenditure of fireworks. At the banquet after it he got so drunk that he half killed some of the guests. Calmed at length, he promised Captain Daniel Crawfurd to go to his wedding the following month.

One night during these terrific orgies he observed a tall well-made person, of strong constitution, with a light moustache and a gay smile that proclaimed a bright nature always ready for merriment. It was not the first time he had seen him, for he had met him before at Gordon's house. But never till then had the man drunk so stoutly in his presence. This individual, who was both handsome and as tall as himself, pleased him. He decided to make an intimate friend of him, and expressed a

Catherine, Empress of All Russia

desire to be invited to his house. The stranger declared himself at His Majesty's orders.

On September 23, 7198 (1690), Peter dined at François Lefort's.

This dissipated adventurer, at that moment thirty-five years of age, was — who would believe it? — a native of the Republic of Geneva. The family was originally Italian, and had settled there at the moment of the Reformation. His late father, a vendor of drugs and spices, was one of the élite of the city, and was proud to be an elder of the Church. When he had made up his mind that his eldest son, Ami, was to be a syndic, that Isaac was to carry on the business, and that the two youngest were to go into trade, he sent François to one of his correspondents in Marseilles. Over-addiction to women and gambling drove the young man before long to enlist in the guards. Old Jacob, horrified that one of his sons should be in the service of the Most Christian King, went himself to the fortress to find him and brought him back to Geneva. Alas! the heroic days were dead. Piety was fading in the noble city of Calvin. Dissoluteness was rampant there; everywhere there was dancing; they dared to game in the house of the Scales. The incorrigible François mingled with this profligate society where he made the acquaintance of Prince Charles of Courland, who boasted himself to be the most brilliant imitator of Versailles, and who was also a perfect imitation of Monsieur, the brother of Louis XIV. The good manners and handsome countenance of the Genevan won him the friendship of this prince who, finding that he had a taste for travel, gave him a letter to his brother Casimir, at that moment in Holland. This petty sovereign, who had placed a body of troops at the disposal of the States General, gave François a good welcome, admitted him to his table and appointed him his secretary. An excellent job.

Lefort got no pay, but his protector gave him his cast-off clothes and the card money. The jealousy of the courtiers prevented him from keeping his place for long.

So he lent an ear to the tempting proposals of a German colonel who was recruiting officers for the service of the Czar Alexis. This man Verstein offered him the rank of captain, although he had never held a sword except in the fencing school. When the convoy landed at Archangel, Feodor, who had just ascended the throne, invited the foreigners to go home again. The White Sea was ice-bound at the moment. They begged him to permit them to go to Moscow, and the permission was granted. None of them had any money, so they made the journey on foot. The capital did not please François, whose one pressing desire was to get away from it. This was no easy undertaking. The Muscovites regarded anyone who tried to leave the country as a spy. He managed to slip in among the train of a Danish envoy, but at the moment of departure hesitated to go with him, started to try the same game with an English ambassador, and in the end stayed on. The want of an inn in the *Sloboda* soon forced him to take a wife. He married Elizabeth Souhay, daughter of a native of Metz who while alive had been Lieutenant-Colonel in the Czar's army, and of an Englishwoman named Boekhoven, one of whose brothers was Gordon's son-in-law. Thanks to the general's patronage he entered the army, became first major, then colonel, and finally, on the occasion of the birth of Alexis, major-general.

Lefort's house was at the edge of the quarter, on the bank of the river Yauza, with agreeable decorations in the French style. Already in Sophia's time it was frequented, to the great displeasure of the stingy and puritanical wife who hated the smell of wine and of tobacco, by Basil and Boris Galitzin, a son

of old Odoïevsky, and the foreigner, Andrew Vinius, the boyar's colleague in the ambassadors' office.

Peter in his turn enjoyed himself in this pleasant house. The host, who spoke Italian, Dutch, English, German and Slavonic, was a most entrancing talker, full of sallies and repartees. His unfailing good humour was enchanting. The Czar went again to visit François on October 16th, and from November on he dined there two or three times a week.

Peter was invited everywhere. Neither the English nor Dutch merchants ever married a son or a daughter now, or baptized a child, without asking him to the feast. Sometimes he took the place of the *maître d'hôtel* and offered the dishes, for he could never see anything done without wanting to do it at once himself. He imitated the foreigners in everything. He learned to fence, although the Muscovites did not wear swords, riding as it is practised in the best academies of the West, and even to beat a drum. He now used to take his drum into parties and, red with pride, would regale the guests with a few sonorous roulades. He studied Dutch, too, with Andrew Vinius. He shared even the hatreds of these new friends. He drank to the victories of William III, and declared — and this earned him the title of Peter the Great in advance at a banquet at Lefort's — that he would delight to lead a campaign at sea against Louis XIV. But Versailles need not shake in its shoes too much. Peter had never yet set eyes on the sea. That did not prevent his having a childish passion for things naval. He dreamed of sailing on the lake of Pereïaslavl along with his thousand *poteshny,* whom he never neglected in spite of his wild way of living.

Alas! old Brandt worked all too slowly. Someone offered the Czar — for all these foreigners hoped to recoup themselves in some way for all the wine he drank on them — to bring ship-

constructors from Holland. He applauded the idea, and Andrew Vinius got into touch with an Archangel merchant, named Houtman, who, following the example of M. van Sweden who had been given a similar commission by Alexis, applied to his brother, who lived in Amsterdam. This brother engaged a score of workmen in the neighbouring port of Zaandam, where there were famous shipyards. Each was to be provided with lodging and food, and to have ten florins a month. Their fellow-countryman, the shipmaster John Puterszoon Boer, was to pay forty, at his end, to their wives who were left to stay in the village.

The little band, led by Arrian Meetje, arrived in February 7199 (1691) on the banks of the lake of Pereïaslavl where Brandt was still hard at work.

The Czar joined them without delay, accompanied by Lefort and Timmerman, whose star was beginning to grow dim. He drank round with everybody and insisted on being called *Peter the Carpenter*. He listened to what John Rensen, Thomas Josias, Claudius Ok, Peter Yp, John Ales and the blacksmith Gerrit Kust told him about the wonderful ships launched at Zaandam, the first city in the world — obviously, since they came from there — for this kind of work. The simple-minded creature believed them implicitly and boasted in his turn. Brandt and he knew the shipmaker's craft pretty well themselves. He hurled a challenge at Arrian Meetje. Two keels exactly the same in dimensions would be laid down, each of them would employ the same number of hands, and the prize of mastership should go to the one who was the first to finish his boat. The astute Dutchman from the start aimed at being second in the race. Peter won, and on March 14th, a first little ship was already under sail.

Let his mother and his wife come in all haste! Natalia knew

how to take advantage of his delight and reconciled him with Eudoxia, who had been simply deserted for a year. Nine months after that another son, Alexander, was to be born, to live only a few weeks.

During the month of June, old Brandt died where Kort had died before him. But Peter was not to be at his funeral.

For as he went up to the assault of the fortress of Presburg, the play city, his latest invention which he had ordered to be built on the bank of the Yauza, not far from Lefort's house, his face was scorched by a grenade. The *poteshny* were becoming dangerous. In October, during another sham battle that Peter's wild savagery turned to slaughter, Prince Ivan Dolgoruky was killed.

Now if he fought so fiercely, it was far less in order to learn the art of war, as has been thought, than to force himself to be courageous. As a matter of fact, he remained a coward within himself, a coward worthy of respect nevertheless, because he knew his weakness and struggled desperately to overcome it. But years and years were to pass before that will was stronger than his nature. He continued to suffer from the same dreadful spasms in the head; he still could never endure to sleep alone. As soon as he was afraid his mind became embarrassed, his keen eyes could no longer see clearly; he displayed an unheard-of credulousness. A monk declared that he had heard Basil Galitzin predict the speedy death of the Czar. Peter trembled in every limb, ordered an enquiry to be held and was not reassured until it was clearly ascertained that the denouncer, a kind of madman himself, had never been in the vicinity of Sophia's former lover.

Did he at least take care of himself? A treatment with wine! Every night he got drunk at Lefort's.

This young man, who imitated everything, even copied himself. Because in the old days, the good old days of Timmerman, three hundred *poteshny* used to follow master and pupil in their trips through the countryside, eternally faithful to childish habits he would have three hundred boyars and more accompany him to his new favourite's.

Lefort's house being too small to receive them all, he thought first of putting up a stone building big enough to hold fifteen hundred persons in the same hall. Naturally his impatience could not endure delay, but if the house was built merely of wood, the interior was superbly decorated with gold, with tapestries and carving. Something in the style of that Versailles which James Dolgoruky used to admire so much long ago.

In the gardens pools were dug, there were cannon, and wild beasts, and in the cellars three thousand crowns' worth of wine. Twelve guards were posted at the door. The finest horses and most sumptuous carriages of the Palace were to be there henceforward.

It was the same day his sister Burlamachi was married in Geneva that Lefort inaugurated his hall with a great feast. They drank the health of bride and groom, the health of King William III, the health of Geneva and its sons, and many others no doubt, for they drank on for seventy-two hours, or for four or five times as long as was necessary for the Muscovites to turn a drawing-room into a stables.

François was an incomparable host. He knew how to divert his guests from the worship of Bacchus with shooting matches, ninepins, illuminations, fireworks and salvoes of artillery.

Peter now went to the banquets in a coat of the French style, but with neither powder nor peruke, because these accessories were a nuisance. To make himself agreeable he never failed

to play the drum in honour of the ladies. He had an idea that he was most civilized when near them and appreciated their society so much that he sent armed *Streltsy* to fetch back to the ball any of them who had gone away before the end of the revels. His gallantries did not end there.

Very soon he had an intrigue with the daughter of the goldsmith Boëtticher, carried on in his own fashion, which was both rapid and inexpensive. He received the girl in his little house by the Yauza, but *only during the day*. He shut her up in the room, kept her sometimes twenty minutes, sometimes an hour, then bade her good-day, purposely forgetting, for he was very stingy, to give her the usual gift. Did he love her? There was only one woman who really did attract this young barbarian, by dint of her wicked eyes and her arrogant cajolery: that was beautiful Anna Mons, Lefort's mistress.

His fancy for any particular friend speedily overflowed to take in that friend's lady love, as though the passion for imitation that dwelt within him extended to everything.

Eudoxia was well aware of her strange husband's behaviour. The many courtiers who were shocked at their Czar's way of living kept her slyly informed. When he left the *Sloboda,* instead of coming back to the Palace where she was waiting for him, all in vain, he would go to find a bed anywhere, sometimes in his own house, most frequently with some *poteshny,* and by preference with Sergeant Bageninov.

These absences were very grievous to her. Natalia came conciliatingly between husband and wife. She prescribed patience to her daughter-in-law, and insisted that Peter was not drawn away to love by his heart but by the violence of his temperament. Eudoxia was unwilling to let herself be convinced, because the sweetness of the moments she had spent with *the light of her life* only inflamed her natural jealousy

the more. The Czar listened courteously to his mother's reproaches. Then he would reply in firm tones that he had endured and not chosen that stupid, superstitious woman, consent to see Eudoxia for a quarter of an hour, and be off to the *Sloboda* again.

Slowly his indifference to her was changed to hate. Already he ranked her among his enemies.

His enemies? They are the persons who thwart him and refuse to appear at the *Salle Lefort*. Those only were with him who were exactly by his side. To have his confidence it was necessary, in the time of Miloslavsky, to belong to the pleasure regiment, and, when he rebelled against Sophia, to join him at the Troïtsa; in these days you had to go with him to the foreigners' houses and acknowledge their superiority. No deep idea was concealed behind this new demand. He was merely continuing to obey that curious instinct that constrained him perpetually to begin his childhood over again. The *Sloboda* thus became a rallying point that like the other two were in opposition to the Kremlin. And more strongly, because Peter was growing in years.

Did they know whither he was leading them, those who were his followers, Troekurov, Apraxin, Kurakin, Repnin, Andrew Matveiev, Artamon Golovin and big Feodor Romodanovsky, that Muscovite of ancient stock, with the thin drooping moustache, honourable, pure, simple-minded, for all that he was born in the thick of tainted politics and intrigues? His father had been the head of the secret Chancery at Préobrajensky ever since it was established there.

They were as ignorant in the matter as Peter was himself. He asked nothing from them except to drink and to laugh. Naturally, to laugh at the fools who disapproved of him, and in the first instance at Adrian of the bushy beard. He was

unable to overthrow the pontiff; he would jeer at him, make him ridiculous.

In his play city of Presburg where there were a flotilla, a tribunal, a recruiting office, he had already appointed a comic patriarch: his old tutor Zotov. So glorious a drunkard deserved promotion. He elevated him — this would be still more burlesque — to the high dignity of Prince-Pope. The old boy was to preside over " the Council of High Buffoonery," which would be divided into departments after the fashion of the real Council of the Clergy. Twelve grotesque metropolitans would support him, as well as the dwarfs and the fools. All should wear masks, like the foreigners during carnival. So our Prince-Pope is ordered to revive the Bacchic mysteries! Let the goblets be emptied, be filled and emptied anew to battle with the invisible enemy!

At Christmas the priests go from house to house singing canticles. Let us mimic their *Slavlenie,* their Noels, proclaims the incorrigible imitator. Let us run through the streets and awaken the people. Let them give us drink! If they don't we will break their bones. Beating his drum Peter goes through Moscow like lightning amid his drunken crew, chanting, guffawing, making faces. Sleepers, down into your cellars with you! The Council of High Buffoonery is athirst!

The spectators, ashamed at such scandalous behaviour, cross themselves secretly; Eudoxia all in tears implores the clemency of heaven; Adrian takes measures behind the scenes. Mutterings rumble among the ranks of the orthodox notables.

" This is Antichrist! This is Antichrist! "

Day is breaking. To what good friend who has good wine and old vodka shall we go? To Leo Narishkin at Pokrofoka; to Sheremetev at Kustsova; to Boris Galitzin's or to Gordon's?

They arrived with rowdy shouts: " The Prince-Pope honours

you with his visit." Before long all were under the table. Peter and Lefort held out longest. One night Patrick drank so much that he came within an ace of dying.

What more can he invent, this Czar of masquerade? He organized cavalry manœuvres with a squadron of dwarfs.

And in this same year 7200 (1692) he founded the new Russian army that was to endure for two centuries and more.

As soon as Peter was bitten with his passion for the foreigners, he entrusted his *poteshny* to them to be instructed in the European fashion. Impossible then to allow these troops, his best according to him, to retain their appellation of " pleasure regiments." Under Gordon's guidance he turns them into two *corps d'élite,* which he names from the villages where they were first brought into existence, *Préobrajensky* and *Semienovsky*. Because the two wooden guns, Alexis' gifts, in the early days followed Peter everywhere with his handful of grooms, the new units will always be accompanied by their artillery. Nor does he forget that the stable-boy Sergius Boshvotov was the first to offer his services. This name will continue to be the first inscribed on the roster. But he soon misses the toy he has been playing with for years. So he creates a company of bombardiers which he will direct himself under the pseudonym of Peter Alexeiev. In the Préobrajensky regiment he remains a simple sergeant like all the other Muscovites, the superior grades being reserved for the foreigners.

Things suddenly take on a new aspect. A creature of mere instinct, never reflecting, he never foresaw the useful consequences of his act, as will be supposed after the event by his flatterers, who burn incense copiously before him but know him very little. If he accepts Gordon's suggestions, it is only because he is wholly urged on by his likings, his hatreds, and even by that keen sense of farce that is now predominant in

him. Peter is pleased to be given an opportunity publicly to prove his regard for his masters, to play a handsome trick on the fuming big-beards, and to humiliate their supporters, the *Streltsy,* for whom he has no particular love. It none the less remains that he effected a great reform none of his predecessors had ever managed to carry through, animated though they were by vastly greater designs. After Ivan the Terrible, Alexis also had dreamed of having a corps drilled like the troops of the West. He had drawn up a plan, brought in hundreds of foreign officers, had a German treatise on the art of war translated and bought eight thousand muskets in Brescia. The very same that his son had easily extorted from Sophia, embarrassed by these useless stores, to arm his *poteshny.*

Peter's great strength lay in this, that he saw no farther than what he really did see. People said: " He is always at play." But while he was playing he fancied he was actually working. That is why, constantly faithful to his past, he went obstinately on with his childish schemes, which expanded as the man developed.

Now he found the lake of Pereïaslavl too small. In May 7201 (1693) he begged his mother to allow him to go to Archangel. He had been entreating her for a long time, and this time Natalia allowed herself to be persuaded. But she made him swear on the Holy Cross that he would not sail on the sea.

Peter returned at once to the lake to tell Arrian Meetje and his fellows to make their way forthwith to the one and only port of Muscovy. Perhaps he might need them there.

And Lefort for his part gazed in melancholy on the Czar's wooden house with its mica window-panes and the low doorway surmounted by a gilt two-headed eagle. What jolly nights they have had drinking there! Every day friends came galloping from Moscow followed by carriages laden with casks.

There even came ladies. François smiles thoughtfully. Peter lately begged him to let him have his mistress, lovely Anna Mons. The favourite consented at once. That is quite natural, since Peter had taken a fancy to her.

On June 4th, His Majesty and his suite arrive at Archangel. The wealthiest Dutch merchants of the town, Houtman, John Lups, de Jong, Van der Hulst, eagerly offer the travellers hospitality. There is no suitable place for them in the port, and the inns are dreadful.

Peter accepts politely. It suits his stinginess very well to be relieved of expense.

"Poor old Anna!" Lefort must be thinking, for he knows how grasping she is.

"The sea!" demanded the Czar.

He is brought down to the quays. Silently he gazes upon that vast expanse of bluish water that swings in, swings back, and murmurs deep in its throat. A flame of rage and irritation lights up within his eyes. What matter to him how lovely it is if he cannot make use of it! For he will keep his oath, not from respect to the Holy Cross, but for his mother's sake.

To console himself for his disappointment, he buys — always the child — a Dutch captain's uniform and a pipe. He cares nothing for the Patriarch's forbidding the Muscovites to smoke. In this disguise he goes into the taverns and drinks with the sailors and with the pilot of the port, Timofei Antip. He parades the foreign words Vinius has taught him, proudly displays his calloused hands and discusses boat-building.

One day he hears talk of the Bourse. Do Dutch captains go there? Yes: then he will go. What are those noisy people with all those papers doing? They are discussing business deals, he is informed. He will make a deal, too. He buys woollen stuff to clothe his new regiments.

What grieves him is the absence of big ships. They come but seldom, he is told with a sigh, since the war of the Coalition, because of those cursed French corsairs that ravage the seas. All the same they ought to come, seeing that he is there! At last there appears an English ship. Never has he admired such an one except in pictures. He is dazzled and would like to go over her from the masthead to the bottom of her hold. Could he not buy this enormous toy? The captain makes excuses. The boat does not belong to him, and the charterer is waiting for the cargo of hemp that she is taking in at this very moment. Peter applies to Arrian Meetje. Do they make ships that size at Zaandam? The other represses a smile. They launch far more splendid ships than this.

"What a marvellous port this Zaandam must be!" muses the Czar.

The Dutchman proposes to build the monarch a yacht here. Peter joyfully accepts and lends an attentive ear to M. Houtman who advises him to order one or two warships from his home country. "How much would they cost?" asks the young man.

The idea interests him. He will discuss it with Vinius, who will write to the burgomaster of Amsterdam. That gentleman, Witsen by name, has put together a handsome volume on Muscovy, which he visited recently, and has dedicated it to the Czar. No doubt then he will take charge of the business.

It was one of the first things Peter gave his attention to, directly he got back to Moscow on October 2nd. That same night he dined at Gordon's. They drank and discussed the army. A few weeks later he borrowed from the General three works on artillery, and in December Gordon presented him with a magnificent gold watch. He took it to pieces at once and ruined it.

This journey to Archangel gave the Czar the taste for travelling. He was making preparations for touring part of his empire when in January (1694) the doctors attending his mother begged him not to go far away from her. The patient's condition was serious. He chafed with impatience. Let them cure her so that he might be able to start.

But he stormed in vain. On January 25th, Natalia died. He bellowed with grief and wept floods of tears. She had loved him so dearly. Streshniev's eyes were wet, too; she had not hated him either.

Peter's grief was dreadful. Nevertheless on the third day he supped in the *Salle Lefort,* and at table he was observed fondling Anna Mons. He took no pains to dissemble any more. Eudoxia's last protectress lay in eternal rest in the Convent of the Ascension. He never wanted to see his over-jealous wife again. Hadn't the fool denied him her bed when he came back from Archangel and insulted Lefort whom she knew to be the person who had given her husband the daughter of the Westphalian wine merchant? Young Natalia, who loathed her sister-in-law, fanned her brother's hatred and urged him to repudiate her. He would consider that, and would consider also making Anna a Czarina.

The violence of this new passion did not prevent him from setting out on the journey he had planned. He descended the river Don and halted at Voronezh. What a splendid port there might be here!

On April 29th, he was in Moscow, and on May 18th, he was off to Archangel again with a much more numerous following than on the first visit. Lefort, Romodanovsky, Buturlin and Gordon were with him. Letters from Holland had informed him that the 44-gun warship he had ordered was sailing on its

way to Muscovy. Arrian Meetje for his part had finished building two ships.

The day of his arrival Peter dined on board his own yacht. Now he had ships, he must needs have sailors. After he had drunk he named Romodanovsky admiral, Buturlin vice-admiral, and the Scotsman rear-admiral. Modestly he contented himself with the rank of captain. Not one of these gentlemen, except Gordon, who had crossed the North Sea and had no very pleasant memories of it, had ever been afloat.

The Czar resumed his Dutch uniform, already filthy, and his pipe. At the beginning of June, he decided to go for a cruise on his yacht. The Rear-Admiral elected to stay on shore. On the 14th, Peter came back from his excursion well pleased, and invited himself to dinner on one of the two English ships that had cast anchor a few days earlier in Archangel harbour. Had they not seen at sea a warship meant for him? They had seen nothing. Perhaps the French corsairs had sunk it. He grew angry, lost all patience, boarded Arrian Meetje's second masterpiece and went to meet the Dutch convoy with the pilot Timofei Antip, who was grumbling because the weather promised to be bad. The captain laughed at his prudence and took charge of the ship. But when a frightful storm blew up, Timofei brutally told his master to keep quiet. They were in danger of being lost. Peter trembled, locked his hands together, even prayed to the Mother of God. Not without great difficulty the pilot managed to bring the wretched boat back to port. Then he made apologies for his somewhat rough behaviour on the high seas. The Czar did not reproach him for doing as he had done. On the contrary he congratulated him on his hardihood.

"You saved my life. I shall never forget it."

Fumbling in his pocket he generously gave him thirty roubles. The courtiers were surprised at this unwonted lavishness.

At last on June 29th, the first great ship of the new Muscovite fleet presented itself. It had been expected for six weeks. It was flying the Dutch flag. Peter immediately decided that his own flag should be modelled on the same pattern. The white should be at the top, the red at the bottom, and the blue in the middle.

Burgomaster Witsen knew his customer. And so, on the *Apostle Peter,* besides the forty-four guns stipulated for, there were fine polished furniture, carpets, silks, French wines, Rhine wines, a few monkeys, parrots and graceful Bologna dogs. Peter clapped his hands with cries of childish glee.

" You shall be her commander," he said to Lefort, who had not figured in the late promotion, " and I shall serve on board as cabin-boy."

First of all they celebrated by getting drunk; then, for he was no churl, he decided to send his thanks to his good Witsen. A pen, and ink!

> " Min her, by this present I can write you no more than this, that John Flamm has arrived safe and sound bringing four and forty guns and forty sailors. Greet all our friends. I shall write you at more length in the ordinary way for in this happy hour I do not feel in the mood to write, but much more to pay honour to Bacchus who with his vine-leaves delights to close the eyes of him who would willingly write you a more circumstantial letter."

And he signed, to show his peculiar knowledge of tongues ancient and modern,

Schiper Fon schi
p sanctus profet
ities

He was, in fact, captain of the *Holy Prophet.*

Now an end to play! Now we must be serious. The pilot John Flamm is to start for home again but the master, Claes Willermoz Musch, remains with Peter. A splendid man! And besides, he comes from Zaandam. Peter wishes to learn navigation on the high seas, to splice the cable, to strike the sails, to clew them up, and all the rest of it.

"I want to begin by being your cabin-boy. What ought I to do?"

"Go up to the masthead and come down and light my pipe," says the other, who has been well primed.

Peter obeys and hands him the smoking tinder.

On July 31st, at the head of his three ships, the twenty-two-year-old captain-czar-cabin-boy, surrounded by his illustrious admirals, escorted four Dutch ships setting sail into the White Sea.

A few cannon fired into the blue filled his cup of joy to the brim, and in September he returned to Moscow to take part in the grand manœuvres called the "campaign of Kojuhov."

General Gordon, who directed operations, had at his disposal all the *Streltsy* regiments belonging to the capital, the Préobrajensky regiment, the Semienovsky regiment and Lefort's brigade. His intention was to divide these thirty thousand men into two armies of equal strength, one of which would defend the fortress of the pleasure city Presburg, and the other would besiege it under the command of Buturlin.

Peter, who had a passion for masquerade, lightened this somewhat severe programme with jests in his peculiar vein. He christened Romodanovsky Czar of Presburg, and Buturlin, who loathed the Poles, was King of Poland.

Now let the show go on! The assault gave every promise of being superb. It lasted, as a matter of fact, for five hours and

cost twenty-four lives. The King of Poland, disgracefully beaten, hid himself in the tents of the conqueror. He was discovered in the end; he bowed the knee in sign of submission. He was forgiven and taken off to the banquet that brought the rejoicings to an end, presided over by the Prince-Pope. Peter throughout these drunken orgies did not spare their burlesque majesties jests that his jovial plough-boy wit dragged out to pitiless length.

A few days later, on October 8th, the manœuvres were repeated. Gordon, who knew that the Muscovite soldier is good at defence but bad in attack, ordered the besiegers to capture the fortress at any cost. Peter approved the order and lent him the support of all his skill and wisdom. He introduced the church singers into the army and fixed the battle for the feast of Saint Francis in honour of the favourite. Lefort knew nothing of tactics, but he was courageous. Seeing his troops in flight, he brought them back, was the first in the assault and planted the flag on the ravelin. He was wounded in the face and unable to see for six days, his head all covered with plasters and bandages.

" You were ready to die rather than leave your place; I shall reward you," said the Czar.

Meetings took place during the following week, at which the bravery of each regiment was discussed, and reports on the fighting. Peter brought the deliberations to a close by announcing that he would have an account of the campaign drawn up on the model of the tales of the Trojan War.

In December, Gordon wrote to a friend in Vienna that His Majesty was making ready to wage war against the Turks and the Tartars, for, in spite of Buturlin, he continued to be a member of the Holy League and the ally of Poland.

CHAPTER TWO

SINCE Sophia's downfall the new government had undergone nothing but set-backs.

Twelve thousand Tartars had advanced in 7200 (1692) as far as Nemirov, and burned its outskirts, carrying away prisoners and horses by hundreds, before they were dislodged by the Cossacks with great difficulty. Mazeppa now foresaw fresh raids into the Ukraine and called for help. Never had public morality been so low. Theft, crimes, brigandage were increasing many times over in Moscow as well as in the country. Travellers from the West set this down to Peter's disorderly conduct.

The situation abroad seemed hardly more brilliant. The Patriarch of Constantinople was uttering heartrending laments and calling for help from his brethren in the faith. The ambassador of the King of France, he announced, was on the very point of obtaining, in return for gifts of money, the guardianship of the Holy Places. Orthodox monks had been driven from them already, and the Muscovite icons of the Church of Bethlehem were being destroyed. In Vienna, the Emperor and the King of Poland, both equally tired of an ally who wasted months before taking the field and went on for years without troubling about the war, entered into conversations with the Turks without deigning to inform the envoy of the Czar.

In five years the government had scored only one diplomatic success, the credit for which was due to its predecessors. In February 7199 (1695) Feodor Golovin had returned to Moscow bringing an advantageous treaty that put an end to rivalry with China and finally settled the frontier between the two empires, which had so long been in dispute.

The die-hard boyars who were in charge of affairs and who had only seized the power in order to put an end to Basil Galitzin's attempts at reform, were entrenched in barren inaction.

The elder Czar, busy with his daughters — the offspring of the Italian surgeon — and his carriages, took as little interest in the fate of the State as his younger brother did.

They all welcomed the idea of a war. The least unintelligent thought that a victory would strengthen their authority. The most stupid had it in their mind that a defeat, for which the new regiments would cunningly be made responsible, would allow them to drive the foreigners out of the country; which was the one political object and aim they had before them.

The troops started to move in the spring of 7202 (1695). On March 26th, Peter left Moscow almost at the same time as his generals.

While a first army, under the command of Sheremetev, moved towards the Ukraine to join up with Mazeppa and then with the Cossacks to attain the region of the lower Dnieper, a second army, in which was the company of the sovereign's bombardiers, made its way towards Azov, its main objective. Gordon, Artamon Golovin and Lefort were the commanders-in-chief.

The Scot was the only one of the three who had a smattering of military knowledge. This fat Muscovite with the cunning eyes, an old *poteshny* and a companion of Peter's childhood, and this adventurer from Geneva, made him impatient. They never stopped squabbling with one another the whole way. The Czar kept his good humour. From a distance he looked upon Azov as another fortress of Presburg. He confessed as much naïvely in letters to his friends. He wrote, gravely playing the buffoon in his habitual fashion, to Romodanovsky, whom he called King, for he was not of those who can easily drop a joke: " Your Majesty's letter dated from Your capital of Presburg has reached me, for which favour of Your Majes-

ty's I am determined to shed my blood to the last drop, for which reason I am pursuing my way." At least he for his part was taking things cheerfully.

Meanwhile Murteza Pasha, Kaplan Ghirai, son of the Khan of the Tartars, Selim Ghirai with the Tartars of Tscherkan, of Taman, of Sudak, and the great Noghais were massing in front of the *golden ditch,* believing that the Czar was aiming at Perekop.

Sheremetev came to grips with the enemy in June at the mouth of the Dnieper, seized the forts of Mubarrek Kerman, Shahin Kerman, and the castle of the Falcon. The Potkal Cossacks on their side laid waste the region of Kilburun and, in an encounter at Batlik, wounded the Kaimakan of Perekop. Meanwhile Gordon, Artamon Golovin and Lefort invested the stronghold of Azov.

Towards the middle of July the assault was ordered, and then countermanded, as the *Streltsy* were reluctant to fight. Peter was informed, hurried to them, insulted them, flogged several of them. He was in a hurry to see the end of the siege. Gordon tried to soothe him, but was met with an outburst of savage abuse and went off to sulk in his tent, secretly rather pleased that the enemy's cannon-balls were making pretty havoc in the brigade of the man from Geneva. On August 4th, Golovin and Lefort commanded an attack that failed. Peter sent at nine in the evening for the Scotsman. This time they agreed to deliver a new assault at the end of the month. Once more the assailants were driven back. On October 13th, after ninety-seven days of the siege, the Muscovites withdrew, pursued by Kaplan Ghirai who killed two thousand of them and captured two cannon.

Peter departed filled with vexation, but not without hope of return. The generals had left garrisons in the forts that had

been captured. Furthermore a chain had been stretched from bank to bank to deny the river to the enemy ships.

None the less the Czar had the bells rung in Moscow. He exalted to the status of a great victory the possession of a few battered palisades, and proclaimed shamelessly that they would have become masters of the stronghold but for the treachery of the Dutch gunner, Jansen, who, because he had been given the knout, had deserted to the enemy. Peter, in short, behaved in exactly the same way as Basil Galitzin, who had accused the hetman of the Cossacks of being responsible for his defeat. Liars both, they resembled one another only in that one point, typical of their race. Peter was not as intelligent as Sophia's lover. But he had eyes of a better quality, incomparable eyes. He had seen what Lefort had grasped, for that very ordinary general was not without ideas: to carry Azov, which is a cul-de-sac at the end of an enclosed sea, it was absolutely necessary to have a fleet.

He wanted to take that town, so he would have that fleet. He was going to build it immediately and look to the building himself.

He remained still the impulsive boy who, before Nikita Romanov's boat, demanded that Timmerman should put it in the water on the spot. But the young carpenter of the lake of Pereïaslavl had grown up. The twenty companions of Arrian Meetje were not enough for him now. He assembled thirty thousand men along the Don and established the main shipyard at Voronezh, the natural port he had discovered on his first journey through the empire. From Archangel, the next place he had visited, he brought the whole maritime population and made them drag along (by rivers, by canals, and even when there were gaps in the chain of waterways, over land with the help of monstrous sledges) his yacht the *Apostle*

Peter, and a new galley with thirty-two guns, also bought in Holland.

He gave orders to fell whole forests without troubling to make sure whether the timber was or was not suitable for ship-building. The ignorant workmen spoiled the material or ran away in disgust. He pursued them, brought them back, took their place, wielded ax and hammer, toiled, sweated, raged. He had the illusion of doing everything himself, and for that matter he was not so far out. Without him nothing would have been done. At intervals a spasm in his head knocked him over for an hour or a day. He got up again, defied mutinous nature by drinking hard till dawn with any of his boon companions who might have whirled down from Moscow. He remained the same. A kind of fevered ambition nevertheless peeped out through the naïve joviality of his letters to his "little sister," to his wife, to Mons, to his friends. Lefort, whom he has raised to the rank of grand admiral, answers him in queerly familiar tones. The life of the camp seems to have drawn their friendship all too close. The other retails to Peter his drinking bouts with Boris Galitzin, announces that he is coming on a visit and sending good beer and muscatel. Choice qualities must be lacking at Voronezh. Peter was not so fastidious! He would sit down to eat in the first inn he came to, regale himself with a substantial *kasha,* break the black bread, the only kind he liked, and throw aside the handsome table cutlery borrowed from the local pope. He always carried his own in his pocket: a wooden spoon with an ivory end, a plain knife, a steel fork with a green bone handle. On no account serve him with sweet dishes or, above all, fish. Away it goes, sped into the air with a mighty kick. It burns his stomach, he says. When he has finished his meal he wipes his mouth with the back of his hands, and, if he is so disposed, has the serving-maid in public. He speaks of the

Czar as if he was his master. For himself he is Peter the Carpenter. He goes to the yard to draw his pay and jots down his receipts and his spendings in an account book that he will henceforward never be parted from.

The child used to play and thought he was working. The sovereign works to earn his living, and, in the very first place, out of a sense of duty. He is not brutishly stupid to that extent. His mind begins to see through things. His old disorderly activity at last finds its *raison d'être* here. This notion of " duty " penetrates and dominates him. He has the word continually in his mouth, for economical and stubborn by nature, when he has an idea he holds on to it like grim death. Thus his trust in the foreigners remains unassailable. In vain do the boyars recall that wise testament of Joachim on the occasion of Jansen's treachery, in vain does that big-bearded Adrian slyly set on the faithful against the heathen, he laughs in his sleeve at their lamentations and their threats, and hunts for specialists over the whole of Europe.

The Emperor sends him an artillery colonel, Casimir de Crage, two engineers, Maron de Bingsford and M. de Wall, six miners, and four gunners; the Elector of Brandenburg sends two engineers, Rose and Holsmann; Holland, an artillery major, Vanderstamm; the Republic of Venice, Vice-Admiral Lima. He engages yet another notable Frenchman: Rear-Admiral Balthazar de l'Osière.

All these people arrive at Voronezh by the beginning of May. For nearly a month the fleet has been ready. It includes the *Apostle Peter* and the *Apostle Paul,* twenty-three galleys and galeasses, four fire-ships, hundreds of skiffs and rafts made of tree trunks.

Peter's masterpiece is a galley with thirty-eight oarsmen, larger still than the Dutch pattern, which was forty-two metres

long and ten broad. The difficulty was to get the crews. Only the two ships and five galleys are manned with proper seamen. Boatmen from the Volga and the great lakes and even grenadiers from the Préobrajensky and Semienovsky regiments fill their place on the other boats.

On May 5th, 7204 (1696), the fleet raised anchor, at the same time as the army began its march, reinforced with Kalmucks whose cavalry was as good as that of the Tartars. This time the boyar Shein is in command of the troops. If they get beaten, the foreigners will not now be accused of being responsible for the defeat. None the less Gordon is placed beside the generalissimo to advise him.

Peter, on board the galley *Principium,* leads the van with the title of commander. Admiral Lefort, suffering from a wound on the right side of his stomach — he had a fall after a drunken night — is on the *Elephant,* on the prow of which his arms have been painted.

On May 20th, at sunrise, the Czar descries the shining sea at the end of the widening river. A halt must be called. The ships and the galleys could not clear the shallow bar. At no great distance, some Ottoman vessels are to be seen.

Peter, presumptuous and fierce, dashes on towards them at the head of a flotilla of small boats. But at the sight of the guns of the thirteen Turkish vessels he turns back while the enemy shout with laughter.

The commander, not completely restored from his fright, goes to Gordon's quarters. He is pale, cast down, discouraged. Next day he is exultant.

During the night, the Cossacks in their *tchaikys,* which are tiny one-man coracles with which they seem to walk over the water, attacked the Turkish boats in the act of bringing reinforcements, provisions, munitions and money, under escort

of sailing vessels. They succeeded in setting fire to them all, and the rest of the Sultan's fleet, stricken with panic, took to flight.

Naturally Peter celebrated this first naval victory in the company of Bacchus.

A sudden freshet in the river was presently to allow the Muscovite ships to cross the bar. Azov was thus completely invested.

The news alarms the Porte. How is the new commander of the stronghold, Ahmed Pasha, to reach his post if the Turks cease to command the sea? On their side the viziers Ali, Bekir, and Hasam Pasha, charged with covering the place, are late. As for the Khan of the Tartars, he is moving with impertinent slowness, annoyed because contrary to custom the Sultan has honoured the Noghais of Budjak with an autograph letter and robes of honour.

Peter, always in a hurry, demands an immediate assault. The generals meet, embarrassed. Different suggestions are put forward. Assent is given to that of Gordon, who proposes to raise a huge embankment of earth on which twelve thousand men can be set to work, and which would be thrust forward little by little towards the tower of the Bird. The army would scale this by means of an inclined plane, and would overrun the fortress from above. Timmerman, whose master has made him a military engineer, applauds so remarkable an idea. The real engineers, the foreigners, are more sceptical. That will be a most magnificent spectacle, thinks the Czar, equally carried away by enthusiasm. Alas! he will never see it.

The commander of the stronghold, who has seen a few days ago the Turkish ships bringing his reinforcements move before Admiral Lima's galleys, makes haste as a matter of fact to capitulate on July 19th. He secures the lives of his garrison, but engages to give up the traitor Jansen.

Who will be the first person to whom this twenty-four-year-old sovereign will announce so glorious a victory? The other Czar? The Duma, his uncles, his sister, his wife, his mistress? It is to Romodanovsky, the burlesque monarch of Presburg, that the merry commander first of all addresses this pompous missive: "My Lord King. Be it known to you, Sire, that God hath blessed the armies of your kingdom. . . . The men of Azov, seeing themselves in the last extremity, have surrendered. How and what have we taken? I shall write this by the next post to Your Majesty."

So it is not his fault if the triumphant return of the troops to Moscow is not completely turned to a masquerade.

At the head of the procession, behind eighteen horsemen, in a carriage drawn by six horses, goes Zotov. The Prince-Pope has donned, for this occasion, merely the costume of the *djak* of the Duma. He has a sword in one hand and a buckler in the other. Deacons and precentors go in front of Feodor Golovin the Commissary for War and Narishkin the Grand Cupbearer.

After these come the fourteen finest horses in Lefort's stables; two of his calèches, empty; the admiral himself in a gilded sledge, followed by his flag escorted by captains and soldiers; Vice-Admiral Lima and Rear-Admiral Balthazar de l'Osière; two squadrons; the flag of the boyar Shein before kettledrummers and trumpeters; thirty outriders in cuirasses; two companies of trumpeters; the great standard of the Czar surrounded by soldiers armed with pikes; two priests in a carriage displaying one an icon, the other a cross; the generalissimo Shein escorted by six horsemen; sixteen standards taken from the enemy and trailed on purpose in the mud; a Tartar prisoner named Atalix loaded with chains; General Artamon Golovin escorted by six horsemen; the Préobrajensky regiment; a car conveying the traitor Jansen wearing a Turkish turban, tied to

a gibbet under a noose, surrounded by instruments of torture, and flogged by two executioners; the Semienovsky regiment; the foreign engineers; Timmerman amid the ship's carpenters and workmen of various crafts; the *Streltsy* regiments; General Gordon and his staff; the Turkish prisoners, dressed in white; then all the other regiments.

Commander Peter Alexeiev, with a white feater in his cap, marched in his place at the head of his company of seamen.

While the procession went by, Andrew Vinius, perched upon the top of the triumphal arch he had built himself, proclaimed through a speaking trumpet the merits of each as they passed.

"Lefort, general, admiral, head of our mighty navy, you came, you saw, you conquered. See our valiant commander. He has beaten the Turks, carried off their stores and their guns. Thanks to him the projects of the infidels have been brought to nought and their ships given to the flames."

General Gordon listens impassively to this harangue. He has the decency to forget that he saw the Czar come to his tent with teeth chattering in terror after his grotesque escapade in the boats against the enemy squadron just before the Cossacks' real exploit.

Obviously it is possible to write history in this way, and then go on to seek for far-reaching intentions where there are none.

When Peter organizes a procession like this, he is completely innocent of the ambitious design of popularizing the idea of the fleet, and proving to the Muscovites the superiority of the Westerners. His too elementary mind, which is wholly lacking in psychology, and at this period, in any feeling for politics, is incapable of seeing so far. Is it supposed, nevertheless, that the

lesson really did emerge from this spectacle? It is easy to predict the future once it has come to be simply the past. Peter, less subtle, allows himself to be guided by his destiny.

Why and how did he ever go to Azov? Zotov taught him to read; Timmerman led him by chance to discover navigation; Lefort pointed out to him the value of ships; the carpenters from Zaandam copied the galley that came out of Holland. So they are all there, and Brandt and Kort would have been there as well, if they had not been dead. That is what he knows; that is what he shows.

With this autodidact, the starting point, since it is fixed in his childhood, is always a simple one. Stubborn, the man goes on in the path marked out, but without ever foreseeing the next stage; it imposes itself on him. He has no idea that the lake of Pereïaslavl lies behind the Yauza, that behind the ice-bound port of Archangel is the sun-bathed sea of the South, and behind Azov, the dream of Constantinople. He has no plan, but he has the gift of adapting himself to circumstances. A born imitator, he readily accepts whatever conception is suggested to him. If it pleases him, that is to say, if his eyes can visualize it for him as already realized, he carries it out on the spot.

Lefort explains to the Czar that the taking of Azov is nothing, that he must retain it, make himself master of Perekop and in due course of the Crimea. There is no other way, declares the admiral, developing an opinion that his old friend Basil Galitzin has certainly uttered in his presence, to secure the routes between Moscow and Constantinople, to seize the trade of Persia and the Levant by joining up the Caspian and the Black Seas. But above everything it is indispensable to possess a great navy. Before everything? Then Peter will make all haste to have it.

And so, on November 4th, exactly a month after the return of the troops, he assembles the States-General at Préobrajensky.

Great landed proprietors shall provide one ship for every ten thousand serfs, monasteries and religious orders one for every eight thousand. Small landowners shall contribute money. The merchants shall build fourteen ships; the Czars and their families, nine. The man of duty taxes himself like the rest. Wood shall be taken gratis from the Don forests belonging to the State. To guide their lack of skill he will engage workmen in Holland, Venice, Denmark and Sweden.

The shipyards of Voronezh will be enormously extended and the whole of Europe will presently take the place of the *Sloboda*. The individual is growing but the foundation remains the same.

Let no one then, looking at him moving humbly by at the head of his company of seamen, throw over him the cloak of orthodox modesty. Or let Vinius be silent! Here again he is playing his part without an afterthought. Peter Alexeiev is commander and captain of bombardiers as sincerely and wholeheartedly as he is carpenter and turner. The man who, in his childhood was not the Czar, can never accustom himself to be the Czar. In some obscure fashion his inmost soul misses a Sophia on the throne just as his boyish hate missed Miloslavsky once he was dead and gone. That is why he invented the grotesque sovereign of Presburg before whom he gravely bows to the earth.

By dint of playing the workman or the soldier, he has become a worker and a soldier, for he gives himself up entirely to whatever he is doing.

One day at Azov he has the thought that if ever his troops, commanded by foreign officers, were to be led against a European army, they would be sure to take it for an army of officers, because of the similarity of the uniform. The impression would be so strong that the Muscovites would take to flight. This ex-

traordinarily sound piece of reasoning cannot be the result of his observation of somebody else. It is the grenadier in himself so impressionable, so easily thrown into confusion, that has felt, in a vision, this fear the consequences of which the sovereign translates into generalization.

He sees only one remedy for it — has he not himself given the example in the *Sloboda?* — to clothe the soldiers German fashion and shave off their beards . . . which would infuriate the Patriarch.

But that fury which he jeers at, he still regards with fear. Prudently he keeps his idea to himself, though it remains with him. Did not his mother, while he was a mere child, teach him to be secretive and sly as a very duty? So he is capable of dissembling, and even, if it suits him, of patient and deliberate lying. Just as he is equally capable of overturning everything in a sudden fit of rage.

CHAPTER THREE

THE Czar fixed a date in the winter of 7206 (1698–99) for the delivery of the sixty shops to be built by the free men of the realm. As he had no confidence in their zeal, he laid down that the belated ones should be liable to the death penalty.

Peter then could not seriously consider extending his conquests in the South for at least a couple of years. And this was no particular vexation to him. The once bellicose boy had no immoderate passion for real battles. He looked on war as a means only and not as an end in itself. Besides, the commander did not wish to make war any more except with his fleet. This passion for navigation, which had come to him comparatively late, was to turn before long to a mania with this always excessive creature.

Even though the worthy pupil of Timmerman was not one of those whose brain is monopolized by one single idea at a time, the shipyards of Voronezh absorbed him to such an extent that he was a little neglectful of his army. He no longer spoke of dressing it in European style nor of cutting off the grenadiers' beards on account of the Patriarch. But he did not even go on with the reform already begun in the organization of the Préobrajensky and Semienovsky regiments. It was simply that he could not spend money on all sides at once. The revenues of the sovereign of Muscovy, who was for this very reason constrained to take to trade, were not very considerable. The cost of the ships he had set himself to build did not allow him to make other financial sacrifices.

And so when the Czar Ivan died, in the month of January, he made haste to lay hands on his civil list, which was thenceforth appropriated to the needs of the troops. He himself, always the man of duty, had already relinquished to the State his share

of his paternal inheritance: 10,734 desyatins of land and 50,000 wooden houses, retaining for himself only the original Romanov fortune: 800 peasants. His income from this, added to his pay as commander and captain, and his carpenter's wages, was enough for him. At any rate that was his own conviction. The cost of the feasts of the *Salle Lefort* figured in the general budget. He drank the wine he had the illusion of not paying for with all the more gusto. Anna Mons frankly regretted the openhandedness of the man from Geneva.

He is not stingy only for himself. He will examine the accounts of his sister-in-law, the Czarina Praskovia, laying down the quantity of provisions to be supplied to her. He shows a little more consideration for the Czarina Martha, Feodor's widow, because it was her childlessness that gave him the throne. But this fact constantly preoccupies his mind, which is inquisitive to the point of indiscretion. He is obsessed with the wish to know whether she is still a virgin.

At the beginning of winter, having arrived from Voronezh, which a certain number of Dutch workmen, including the blacksmith Gerrit Kust, whom he honoured with an especial friendship, have just left for Holland, the Czar grants an audience to Sheremetev. The boyar is now approaching his forty-fifth year. His stomach has rounded out but his delightful naïveté is still the same. Peter has the highest opinion of him: an honest man and a brave horseman who never flinches under fire and who is respected by the troops. He behaved well at Azov. Today he is much less devil-may-care than among the bullets. It is embarrassing to him to ask his sovereign permission to keep a very bold oath he took during the late war, when he saw himself in imminent peril of death. He swore, if his life were preserved, to prostrate himself on the tomb of Saint Peter in Rome. Now Moses forbade all intercourse with the Gentiles.

True, he had once gone to Vienna, but that was under orders from the government. As since the days of Ivan the Terrible, it had always been established and held that the desire to travel among the heathen is akin to high treason, he would be pleased to be given a mission that would save his face. The Knights of Malta are, they say, highly skilled in all sea-matters. He might go and visit them and get from them valuable details to the greater glory of the fleet. The Czar gives ear to him, declares that he is well-advised to seek instruction among foreigners, and grants his request.

" When do you think of setting out? "

" Oh, I shall make haste. We are now in December. I count on starting next June."

Peter's decisions are prompter than that. He will send off, almost on the spot, some sixty young gentlemen to learn artillery and the art of fortification at Vienna and in Venice, shipbuilding in Holland and in England.

And now in the great imitator arises the desire to imitate them.

Just at the moment there is in preparation an embassy intended to reap the results of the capture of Azov. Has not Warsaw already shouted " Hurrah for the Czar! " The embassy will urge the Christian princes to continue the struggle against the infidels and will ask the States-General of the United Provinces for help in the shape of equipment for seventy ships and a hundred and thirty galleys.

He would not venture, at once too proud and too shy, divining himself a barbarian within, to appear at western courts in the guise of sovereign. Besides this would be so contrary to custom that the Patriarch might be angry and create a dangerous manifestation of public wrath. In fact one had to go back to the eleventh century, that is to say, to the epoch when there was a

Russia linked with Europe, to see one of his predecessors, the Grand Duke of Kiev, venturing forth among the Gentiles and going to Worms to visit the Emperor Henry IV. But the ardour of his curiosity makes the young man ingenious. He schemes to conceal himself in disguise among the attendants of the ambassadors, taking a false name, according to his usual custom.

And so he convenes the Duma and informs the boyars of his intention to travel abroad in order to acquaint himself with the manners and the laws of civilized nations, and to adopt the best of them for Muscovy.

Nobody believes him. Everybody supposes that he wants to go on amusing himself. Here those big-beards show themselves perspicacious enough. For he is lying. He does not tell them the real reason that is urging him to leave Moscow. He has certainly disclosed it to no one but Lefort, and perhaps to his friend Vinius.

The scheme arouses displeasure. The assembly opposes it strongly. These barbarians presume to think they know everything about mankind.

" We are very well as we are," they declare, " and we have no wish to be better than our fathers."

After which Peter begins his preparations for departure.

The head of the embassy is the Admiral-General Lefort, sailor and soldier, too, Governor of Novgorod since the taking of Azov. So here he is, one of the most conspicuous men in the State. Still, he enjoys more titles than any real authority. He holds offices, but does not share in the government, great as is his credit with the sovereign, and even for that very reason. No design of policy, such as that, for example, of taking advantage of the foreigners' teaching without consenting to allow them to have any part in public affairs, guides Peter's conduct. He is more complex and at the same time more simple. What was it

then that first drew him to the man from Geneva? His great stature, and his incomparable powers as a drinker. He loves those who resemble himself physically. He gives them his confidence more easily, for, as he is both mistrustful and untinctured with psychology, he has the illusion of understanding them better than the others. At the same time, he desires them to be a little different from himself. For him to feel a really lively affection, it is essential that he should be able to indulge in his very strongest tendency, and imitate something about them.

A favourite will always be an *alter ego* and with regard to power his position will conform to that of the Czar himself. In the good days of Timmerman, that great savant never had any official title because Peter took absolutely no interest in affairs of State. Today Peter's influence is increasing and so the part Lefort plays extends. None the less, both of them must needs take heed to the people that remain attached to the procedures of the past.

The Chief of the Embassy will therefore have two Muscovite coadjutors. The first is Feodor Golovin, Commissary for War, Governor of Siberia and author of the successful treaty with China. He has no distaste for foreigners and does not lack finesse. The Jesuits, who had acted as interpreters for the envoys of the Celestial Empire, found as much at the time, when he cleverly prevented them from directing negotiations to suit themselves. The second is Procopius Wosnizin, the Governor of Bolkho, Secretary of State with the rank of Chancellor. He has a dreadful face, imperturbably dumb; his eyes are as black as his beard. He has proved his worth at Venice, at Vienna and in Persia. At the beginning of Sophia's reign, before the formation of the Holy League, it was he who actually signed the peace with the Turks.

Peter, who always needs to be surrounded with comrades,

faithful to the habit contracted in his childhood at Préobrajensky, chooses forty " volunteers " to go to Europe with him. Among those whom he selects freely are Andrew Matveiev, his oldest friend and the only one left out of the three belonging to the old days since Woronin and Lukin were killed in the siege of Azov, Feodor Apraxin, the brother of the Czarina Martha, his young cousin Alexander Narishkin, the son of Leo, his brother-in-law Boris Kurakin, the husband of one of Eudoxia's sisters, James Dolgoruky, a Sheremetev closely related to the general, two of his old *poteshny,* Gabriel and Michael Golofkin, Soltikov, of the family of the secretary who was murdered by mistake at the time of the *Streltsy* revolt, and lastly, a very handsome lad with golden ringlets, and rosy skin as delicate as a woman's. His name is Alexander Danilovitch Menshikov, he is a sergeant in the Préobrajenskys, and though his father, a corporal in the first pleasure regiment, is no more than a stable hand, he has two qualities that few of the Muscovite gentry have: he is extraordinarily clean and smart. Scandalmongers declare that he has been seen selling pies in the streets of the capital. Peter had noticed him in Buturlin's tent and soon became greatly attached to him. He makes him sleep in his own room, displays ardent affection for him, calls him *my brother, my dearest friend, child of my heart,* or just *my heart.*

The Czar is too fond of carnivals not to take with him on his expedition Sibusky, Prince of Iremetia, the heir of a dethroned sovereign of Tartary who has sought refuge in Moscow and who displays Persian costumes of unheard-of richness. Everybody for that matter will be superbly attired. The Palace wardrobes are ransacked for gala dresses, the finest, on which the Crown diamonds are sewn, being prepared for Lefort, who is to dress in the Muscovite fashion for ceremonious audiences.

Twelve noblemen and two pages will escort each ambassador,

who will also have one or several secretaries at his disposal. Golovin will take three, his son, his brother and his brother-in-law, Wosnizin two, both relatives, and Lefort one, his nephew Peter newly arrived from Geneva. It suits the adventurer to have beside him a witness who can confirm to his family the accuracy of his letters in which there is no question of anything but his tremendous fortune. This sceptical, dissolute, gay Protestant, magnificently free from self-seeking — he possesses absolutely nothing but land, and would be as poor as he started out in life if he crossed the frontier — keeps deep down inside him remorse for having grieved his family during the most turbulent period of his existence, when he was the friend of Prince Charles of Courland. Gladly would he erase those disgraceful memories from their minds. His master's benefactions have no value in his eyes save as they help him to realize this design. Peter does not fathom motives so secret as this. But he can observe their effects. Lefort's honesty, almost too good to be true, is a change for him from the continual cheating ways of the boyars or from the grasping Anna Mons.

Besides the body of noblemen and secretaries, the embassy will include a master of the Court, an equerry, a majordomo, four chamberlains, four dwarfs, a buffoon, doctors and surgeons, six trumpeters, a cup-bearer, a steward, a cook, lackeys, footmen, coachmen and outriders. The seventy tallest and handsomest soldiers in the Préobrajenskys, and their officers, will also be in the party. Thirty-two vehicles, four baggage waggons, one of which contains His Majesty's drum most carefully packed, twenty-two harness horses and twelve saddle horses have been ordered.

The Czar will hide among the *sous-officers,* fitted with the new name of Peter Mihaïlov. He has ordered a seal with the inscription: *The scholar needs a master,* and showing a ship-

wright among the tools of his trade. It amounts to a confession in itself. No one under pain of death is to reveal the real identity of this pretended supernumerary.

At the end of January, two million roubles in specie meant for various purchases have been got together, and letters of exchange drawn on England and Holland. Furs and silks will be taken along as well, not to sell in the markets this time, but to give as presents.

During the Prince's absence the administration will be entrusted to Romodanovsky, whose burlesque royalty of Presburg is thus turned into a real viceroyalty. The choice is not a bad one, for that barbarian is honest and readily turned to bloody-mindedness. He will not tolerate any misdemeanour. Leo Narishkin, Streshniev, Boris Galitzin and Prozorofisky are to assist him. It is Gordon who has advised Peter to appoint the last named, a secret enemy of Basil's cousin. They will keep close watch on one another. The Scotsman, in conjunction with the boyar Shein, will take command of the troops of the capital.

These matters once settled, the departure of the Embassy is fixed for the 4th or 5th of February. As the troubles in Poland, provoked by the double election to the throne of the Prince de Conti and Augustus de Saxe, made crossing that country a thing not without danger, the first itinerary — Vienna, Venice, Rome, Holland — is altered. First they will go to Riga, then to Koenigsberg, proceeding thence to Dresden and Vienna.

On the evening of February 1st, Peter, in excellent humour, seated between Menshikov and Anna, was engaged in drinking Lefort's wine — the cellar must be emptied before he goes so far away — when an individual presented himself and insisted on an immediate interview with His Majesty and in strict privacy. This was Elizariev, one of the two *Streltsy* whose accusations against the Regent had decided the Czar's flight to the

Troïtsa on the famous night of August 7th. This person really had a first-rate head for an officer of the secret police. He was behind the scenes of every plot. This one seemed serious. Pushkin and Sakovnin, both zealous partisans of Sophia, were directing it with the connivance of Tsykler, who was ill-pleased at receiving orders to go to Azov. This soldier had not betrayed the previous government to be sent today to an uncomfortable garrison where there was a dangerous chance of seeing the enemy.

These conspirators, explained Elizariev, were at that moment gathered in Sakovnin's house in company with State Councillor Tscherglowitov, a colonel of Cossacks, and several officers. At midnight they would set a fire going, knowing that the Czar always hastens to lend a hand and organize the work of fighting the flames. Men posted in ambush would then assassinate him in the darkness.

Peter sends for Prince Trubetzkoy. At eleven o'clock let these scoundrels be laid by the heels! He goes back to his drinking. His notions become confused. At half-past ten he sallies forth, gets into his little carriole and drives it himself to Sakovnin's. Light is showing behind the windows, he must question the rascals. He pushes the door open, goes in and sees around the table the traitors, glass in hand. Some of them drop their wine, seized with terror. He is trembling as much as they are, but knows better how to dissemble. He says he was passing through their neighbourhood and that, guessing they were having a jollification, he thought he would like to have the pleasure of their society.

The conspirators keep a close eye on him. One stupid fellow whispers in his neighbour's ear: " Now would be the time." The other replies: " Not yet."

Footsteps clatter in the street. Then Peter roars:

" Scoundrels, if it is not the time for you, it is the time for me."

Troubetzkoy and his men have already invaded the room. The leader of the detachment in the first place gets a fist full in the face.

" Son of a whore, I'll teach you the time."

But the Czar remembers. He had said eleven and not ten. The mistake is his. He acknowledges it and alters his opinion: " You are a hero."

Let the case against them be prepared quickly! Let them be put to the question! Let all the guilty ones be hunted out! Let not one be spared!

To prison with that idiotic monk Abraham who accuses him of demeaning himself by working on the boats, of not occupying his proper place in the procession, of dancing attendance on the foreigners, and abandoning his wife.

His wife? Eudoxia's family is certainly in league with the bandits. Let all the Lapuhins be arrested! To exile with the father and brothers, all but the youngest. That ignorant lout one day deranged the peruke of the illustrious Admiral-Governor of Novgorod. How can such a crime be adequately punished? Pour spirits of wine over him and set fire to him. Since his friends like fire-raising that will be a beauty for them!

The knout for anyone who repeats the nonsense that the sovereign is going to Germany to turn German. Let the popes stop talking about Antichrist. Arrest the recalcitrant faithful. He is in a hurry to start; he grows impatient. Now it is the turn of the great folk. Let those who sulk over building the ships, or refuse to do it, let them go and breathe the pure air of Siberia or the White Sea. Let none of them show a face in Moscow during his absence, under pain of death.

" You quite understand, Feodor Yurievitch? "

Romodanovsky assents, nodding his head in silence.

And now, since all the vexations he has endured for twenty years have come from that fellow, let Miloslavsky's body be dug up. Bring the filth on a sledge dragged by twelve swine to Préobrajensky where the political examination is proceeding. Open the box. The worms have half-eaten away the unrecognizable carrion. For all that let it be taken out and chopped into mincemeat. Is that pulp to be given to his dogs to eat? The poor dear beasts he loves so much would run too much risk of dying of it. No: bury the foul mess under the floor of the torture chamber. What once was the cruel Ivan Mihailovitch will like that be better placed to hear the groans of his accomplices.

Meanwhile let the embassy go forward and wait for him at the frontier if he has not caught it up on the way. It is very belated already. Come on, let them make a little haste and provide some subjects for execution.

The condemned arrive in the great square. First of all cut off their right arm and left leg. They are comic like that. Off with the left arm and right leg; they'll certainly look more comic still. They howl and utter insults yet. Off with their heads!

Is the stone column he had ordered erected in the exact place of the one that commemorated the murder of his uncles? Hoist the heads on pikes and plant them on the top. Trim the shaft with the arms and legs all around. When the frost goes, fling them on the dunghill.

Presently the Czar, travelling by sledge and accompanied only by a valet, a footman, and a dwarf, joined the embassy at Pskov within sight of Swedish Livonia.

Before leaving the capital he had compelled the Patriarch to give him his blessing, not that he set any great store on it, but because the gesture would be the sign and seal of Adrian's submission.

CHAPTER FOUR

ONE person who could make neither head nor tail of it was Count Eric Dahlberg, governor of the stronghold of Riga in the name of the King of Sweden. At the end of January two Muscovites all in a whirl had come to announce to him that a great embassy to Vienna, suddenly altering its route, would be in his city presently. The Count taking fire in his turn, dispatched an interpreter to Moscow, sent Major Glazenap to the frontier, and posted peasants with carts and horses to keep on the lookout at definite points. He thought it very necessary to give a distinguished reception to these strangers. Ought he to invite them to a set banquet? Lacking time to refer to His Majesty in Stockholm for instructions, he had questioned persons of eminence, who told him that such had not been the custom there for the last forty years. He would accordingly content himself with arranging a brilliant entry into the city. And now he had been waiting for his guests for six weeks. The peasants were freezing, the major losing patience, the interpreter had never come back, nor the couriers dispatched after his either. What could be going on in Moscow?

On March 14, 1697, the Governor of Pskov informed him that the embassy was on its way. Dahlberg knew without knowing it overtly that the Czar was concealed among the gentlemen of the convoy. Now a false report was current that the sovereign had had a serious attack of illness at the start of the journey. This explained the delay.

On the 22nd, Glazenap through his spy-glass descried vehicles in movement round Pskov. The Muscovites had at length made up their minds to cross the frontier. " Will their expenses be defrayed? " That was their first question. They seemed at first satisfied to find that their hosts placed at their disposal, at each stage, two hundred pounds of bread, three casks of beer,

thirty measures of brandy, forty pounds of salt, an ox, five sheep, thirty fowls, fish *ad libitum*. They thought their entry most successful and their quarters proper. Dahlberg, who declared himself indisposed — ought he to ignore the Czar's presence or not? — sent his compliments by officers of high rank. Every morning a captain visited Lefort to make certain that they lacked nothing. The Admiral-General declared himself delighted. He wrote to Moscow that they were being treated magnificently and most honourably. In a letter to Vinius His Majesty went further still.

But presently things began to go wrong.

Riga, which is beautifully situated, was a stronghold planned and equipped in the most modern fashion. Never had Peter had an opportunity to admire stone-faced bastions or palisaded counter-scarps. He wished to see them much closer. Inquisitive and heedless of rules he climbed down into the ditches with Menshikov to measure their depth, made pencil sketches of the main works, mocked at the sentries of the port, climbed up on the highest roofs of the city to examine its situation the better. For their part the other members of the embassy made rowdy visits to the shops and the taverns, leaving behind them everywhere the signs of their dirty habits. Dahlberg was annoyed and complained to Lefort. Henceforth, we will not allow more than six persons at a time to come within the gates, and the permission will be for two hours only. Peter is enraged at this impolite behaviour, gives vent to a string of abusive names, and makes haste to depart. The quarters are abominable, the food insufficient! When the bills are presented the outcry is redoubled. Eighty ducats for the baggage: it's sheer robbery! Dahlberg, in the most accommodating way, cuts the bill in half. That only emboldens them. They refuse to pay for candles. Their hosts protest. There is a wrangle, almost a free fight.

"Let them settle their expenses as they please and get out of here!" sighs the governor.

They went, but in a very disgruntled temper, vexed that they had not been given a ceremonious banquet in the castle. And the crossing of the Dwina in the thick of the breaking up of the ice was not to their taste either. The ambassadors protested against the insufficient number of boats, then against the meagre escort, ten dragoons who waited for them on the other bank, with four state carriages. On the border of the country the squabblings began again. The horses are being reckoned at too high a price against them. Insults fly thick from both sides. They won't forget Livonia, never fear! But what sat worst on their stomachs was the dinner they did *not* have.

Golovin thinks the Chinese are preferable; Wosnizin's black eyes dart lightnings; Lefort, who at first was calm and quiet, swells the chorus. Peter bellows like a damned soul in hell. He will be revenged for those rascals' beastly manners. How much was that they were asking for candles?

The journey has had a poor beginning. They push on, soured and crabbed, to Mitau, the capital of the grand duchy of Courland, where the Prince Casimir, whose secretary Lefort had been in Holland, is living.

Now these *are* civilized people! Artillery salvos are fired in honour of the embassy; the streets are lined with troops; and from the top of the steps of his Palace Casimir gives them good welcome. *He* is not sick, like Dahlberg! Everything he says displays intelligence.

By his commands everyone will be entertained free of cost from the smallest to the greatest, quarters, food, wines, spirits, and not merely during this stay at the Court but during the whole time they are within his territories. That is some consolation to them for the huckstering of the Swedes. Lefort declares

as much in his speech of compliment. He compares the ambassadors to the ill-treated Levite and the Grand Duke to the Good Samaritan who poured oil in his wounds.

Casimir's magnificent dogs charmed Peter. He kissed them, like his own, on the muzzle; then deserting the embassy, he set off for Libau with the Prince of Iremetia and Menshikov, intending to go to Koenigsberg by sea while the others continued on their way by land.

The stormy weather prevented him from taking ship immediately. He spent a week trailing among the taverns of the port, appraising the girls, drinking with the sailors. He pretended to be a corsair captain whom His Majesty the Czar, who already owned a mighty fleet, had commissioned to arm a ship. He would no doubt buy it in Holland or in England.

The ambassadors would meet on their way an Englishman called Bomberg. And they whisper in his ear that the Czar is travelling incognito. But let him not repeat that to a single soul! This stranger could never guess or imagine what affronts they had to put up with at Riga. They asked them for five hundred ducats for their baggage and the same for candles. The Governor never even invited them to dinner.

In the meanwhile, Peter was at sea and arrived at Pillau, the port of Koenigsberg. The Elector of Brandenburg had sent the Prince of Holstein-Berck to meet him. His Majesty, infuriated at having his disguise stripped off, sent word in reply by the captain, that there was only one distinguished person on board, the Prince of Iremetia. At ten o'clock, he changed his mind, and demanded to be brought to the quarters that had been prepared for him. This time it was the grand master of ceremonies, Johann von Besser, a gallant courtier, interested in science and a celebrated poet, who assumed the duty. He bends the knee and bows, sweeping the ground with his plumed hat. Peter

finds him burlesque, savagely wrenches off his peruke and flings it away. Let the idiot go and fetch him a girl! He wants one on the spot.

Next day, the Czar, not quite so drunk, gets into a hack and is driven to the Palace. The lackeys, pale with shame and embarrassment, bring him in by the back. What will their master, such a stickler for etiquette, say to all this?

Frederick, who is weakly, all but a hunchback, and not at all intelligent, has as a matter of fact an inborn turn for magnificence and grandeur. At ten years of age he was not organizing pleasure regiments; he was creating an Order and distributing it in all seriousness. The desire to imitate Louis XIV impelled him to take an official mistress, Mme de Wartenberg, although love-making bored him, and he never so much as saw her in a bed.

He went about at her side in a mysterious garden, never saying a word to her, or he warmed his toes in front of her in a private apartment. At the end of an hour he would send her away. All he was in love with was the complicated ceremony that ordered the lady's arrival and her departure.

The coming of an embassy, therefore, always filled him with joy. In spite of this curious mentality, something kept him from taking offence at his guest's uncouth, familiar manners. The Czar was the ally of the Emperor, on whom he was counting to change his electorate into a kingdom, for tormented with vanity he dreamed of nothing else than a real crown.

What a pity, thought Frederick, that this strong, well-built sovereign should have such an ungainly air. He walks badly with his back hunched up sailor fashion, is continually pulling faces and his head never stops shaking. He has no idea at all of etiquette; but he is no fool. The Elector would perhaps re-

proach him, in his innermost heart, for gulping off his finest Hungarian wines too quickly, but the mind of a prince who is fain to be generous could not condescend to dwell for long on such trifles.

This pedant in fine manners did not displease Peter on his side, for all curiosities attracted him. During the ten days he stayed at Pillau alone with Menshikov and the Prince of Iremetia, he went daily to pay a visit to Frederick who was surrounded by the Margrave, the Prince of Holstein-Berck, the grand president, and a few others. The Court life bored him to death. But he was quite at his ease at the banquets, which reminded him, though in a more subdued form, of the suppers at the *Salle Lefort*. He had no feeling for nice shades of difference. Shy at first, drink unfettered his tongue. He praised the delicacy of the manners of the West. In his own country, he declared, not without hardihood, they were crude and cruel to an extent that distressed him. But when they showed him the wheel, an instrument unknown to him, he at once clamoured for an experimental victim. Alas, in all the prison there was not a single criminal sentenced to that torture. If the embassy had been there *he* would have taken somebody or other for the purpose.

He unburdens himself of other confidences. His States swarm with ignorant folk, especially among the clergy. He quotes an example of this at great length: the election of the Patriarch. He will bear in mind that the story of the beard and the coachman of Marcellus amused the company very much, and will tell it everywhere in future. For he does not by any means scorn to shine. Thus he will play the drum before the Elector. And everybody exclaims that he plays it better than the Count von Kniphausen at Wolfenbüttel. He has no notion of what they are referring to, but the compliment sends him into ecstasies.

Deep down within himself, in spite of his airs of mingled naïveté and arrogance, Peter suffers from the feeling that he is a barbarian. That humiliates and revolts him. He tries by jeering at the Muscovites to pull the wool over the eyes of the audience. He aspires to be their equal, and the desire to resemble them makes him eager to learn. But this sincere and earnest will has no other guide but an untutored mind dominated by vulgar tastes born from his contact with the grooms of Préobrajensky or with the very miscellaneous population of the *Sloboda,* and dominated also by his blind passion for things of the sea.

He desires to copy the foreigners, but with these various elements interposing, it is not a Johann von Besser that he takes as his model, but the men of the harbour. And so he is to be seen moving about on the river, clad in a sailor's rig and wearing a belt slung bandolier-wise from which a cutlass hangs. Imitation with this creature of impulse is always slavish. To prove that he is well up in his craft, he helps the people on board the ships, and proudly shows off his hands all smeared with tar.

This disguise, which he imagines screens his incognito, his slouching walk, his perpetual faces, his abruptness, which his fiery nature along with an unconscious roguery keeps him from correcting, make him the laughing-stock of every vagabond.

He never notices their mirth, which is kept within bounds by the vigilance of the authorities. His eyes are fixed on nothing but the end he has set before himself: to learn. Eternally faithful to his childhood, he applies the methods of Timmerman here. He ransacks the town just as in the old days he ransacked the treasure chamber of the Kremlin.

A lady in the street wears a watch pinned onto her bodice.

" Stop! " he bellows.

He seizes the object, examines it, gives it back. The passer-by is now free to go on her way. He asks an apothecary to place the live salamander, kept in one of the jars in his shop-window, in his hand that he might examine it more closely. He visits workshops, puts hand to the machines, tries to use them. He acquires a multitude of little objects, and especially turned amber pieces, which he finds extraordinary. For ivory is the only thing he understands how to turn on the lathe.

For Peter learning means adopting. As he cannot pack the whole of Koenigsberg in his baggage he keeps tablets always in his pockets and covers them with notes. He hears a military flourish of trumpets and sees that the sound of the brass makes the soldiers' stride more warlike.

" Mem: To procure the like for my regiments," he writes.

The church music charms him. He cannot purchase those lovely harmonies. He engages the Kapellmeister at a thousand ducats by the year, to teach the same pieces to the Muscovites.

" I am sorry," he declared naïvely one day as he gazed at the river Puget, thirty feet deep, " that the city doesn't belong to me. I should make a fortified port here."

His attention was called to a sandbank and certain shallows that were serious hindrances to such a project. He said:

" Trifles! All that is needed is to dam the stream with a dyke and to turn the river into a new bed."

For everything seemed a simple matter to him. He felt no surprise to be handed a brevet as master-gunner after four or five lessons from the Prussian Colonel Sternfeld.

His superstitious belief in the foreigners forbade him to suspect that he did not know what they said he knew. He showed off his precious diploma to Lefort, crimson with pride.

The embassy has arrived at last. Peter looked on at the Elector's side on the balcony of the Palace, as it moved past.

" I am afraid I shall laugh tomorrow," whispered Frederick, " when I make the usual inquiries for Your Majesty."

There was really no cause for fear with him: he did not laugh.

He listened, in a scarlet coat with gold buttons set off with diamonds, while Lefort, in a long fur-trimmed robe, sword at side, dagger in belt and his head covered with a bonnet with a silver aigrette, thanked him for the engineers and gunners he had sent to the siege of Azov. Every time his own name or the Czar's was pronounced, the Elector touched his hat. Peter was among the onlookers. His attempts to hide his face with his hat attracted universal attention. He had a taste but not a turn for incognito.

Without wasting too much repining for his Hungarian wine, Frederick as a practical man still wanted to see his expenditure serve some good purpose. He urged his guest to enter into an alliance against Sweden. The Czar answered evasively, for he was preoccupied with the affairs of Poland. Here they were both in agreement to support Augustus against Louis XIV's candidate.

"I would rather see the devil mount the throne of that Republic than Conti," Peter swore.

He had already sent orders to Romodanovsky to move an army on to the Lithuanian frontiers. He was determined not to leave Koenigsberg before being completely enlightened as to how events were shaping.

He would take advantage of this enforced delay to regale Frederick with an entertainment worthy of such a delightful court. At the end of the banquet a set piece would be touched off, the first part of it showing the taking of Azov, with the

Russian eagle, the second part displaying the fleet. The next day there would be a combat of wild beasts excited by the din of kettledrums and trumpets.

Did the Elector not like the program? Did he bear in mind the appalling condition to which the clatter of a silver dish falling on the ground had reduced His Majesty, who spoke of killing everybody out of hand and insisted on the awkward servant having a sound flogging? Had Prinzen confided to his master that the Czar the other day, flying into a mad fury, had in his presence almost murdered his principal ambassador? Was Frederick afraid of a repetition of scenes like these, which were far from being in harmony with an etiquette modelled on that of Versailles? He preferred, in spite of the super excellence of the spectacle, to refrain from being present, and sent Count von Kreyzen and Provost von Schlacken to convey his excuses to his host. The messengers were introduced. Peter was seated at table with one of his dwarfs, and Lefort, who was smoking his pipe, while Peter covered his face with kisses. Nowadays, drunkenness always made him affectionate. His Majesty asked the gentlemen to deliver their commission. Quickly he interrupted them with a smash of his fist on the table.

" The Elector is a good man, but his Councillors are devils. Get out! "

He seized one by the throat and pitched him out of the room with violent kicks behind.

" This Court forces a man to too many ceremonies," Peter presently declared to the admiral.

He was in a hurry to get to Berlin. He could go off now in peace. Augustus seemed to be settling down securely in Poland, He regretted merely that he was prevented from going to Hamburg by sea because of a certain Colbert who was making a squadron under the orders of Jean Bart cruise in front of Dant-

zig. The Elector's promise to defray the embassy as far as Wesel consoled him.

This time he wished to travel post. No more speeches, no more receptions. In Berlin, which he sped through like lightning, in the beginning of July 1697, he took just time enough to master, in a few hours, tactics and strategy, as was testified by the diploma of efficiency awarded to him. Still with the same haste it was decided to give up Vienna for the moment. The Czar's envoy in that capital assured him that the new treaty of alliance was already negotiated. Peter was delighted because Holland, of which he had been given such an exalted idea, was a greater attraction. The embassy was now split up into two separate parties, owing to the difficulty of finding a sufficient number of horses, and quarters adequate for so many persons. One section, including the whole suite, went by way of Minden and Cleves; the other with the Czar and the ambassadors by Lübeck and Hamburg.

On the way Peter was the recipient of a flattering invitation which it would have been highly improper of him to refuse. It came from the prettiest and cleverest woman in Germany.

Princess Sophia Charlotte, the wife of the Elector of Brandenburg, had formerly very nearly married the Duc de Bourgogne. From her stay at Versailles she kept an enduring predilection for French manners and French literature. Endowed with exquisite discernment, a rare delicacy of taste and feeling, supported by all the brilliancy of youth and grace, the electoral princess spoke four languages and was the friend and the favourite correspondent of Leibnitz. The Italian Gregorio Leti, who had the honour to be received at her Court, compared her suavely to a dove without gall, a star that knew no setting, a bee without a sting, a fountain without moss, and a tree of life whose angelic virtues and celestial perfections could give life,

spirit and greatness to others. This accomplished lady had one last quality, which is stupidly called a defect: she was curious. She confessed as much to Fuchs, Frederick's minister of State, who kept her informed of the Czar's comings and goings at Koenigsberg, since she was detained and kept with her mother, the dowager Electress of Hanover. This barbarous sovereign interested her and excited her curiosity. She wrote to the minister: " It is a rare adventure to have the master incognito with his embassy, a thing that has never been done except in the romances. I should be exceedingly sorry not to see him, and I should be glad if he could be persuaded to pass through here not to see but to be seen, and we should be delighted to spare what is usually given for rare animals to spend it on this treat."

Peter, who was persuaded, but not shown the letter, consented to an interview, which took place in a castle near Koppenbrügge, four miles from Hanover, belonging to the Prince of Nassau-Dietz, the Stadtholder of Frisia.

The arrival of this phenomenon from the North, drew into the country such a concourse that the Czar was seized with alarm and hurriedly left the village again. He had thought he was only going to meet Sophia Charlotte. There had to be an hour's parley and arguing. In the end he agreed that the princess should be accompanied by her mother, her brothers, and the Duke of Zell. He finally decided that the company should enter by one door in the supper room and he himself through another at the same moment.

Everything went off as he had wished. But before these two beautiful women whose eyes were filled with intelligence, and who were paying him their compliments, he was as much perturbed as the boy of long ago before Menzies, or even worse. Uncouth and abashed, he hid his face in his hands. Incapable of answering the speeches that he divined were gracious and

elegant, he lost countenance more and more, and sighed out, calling up all the little German he knew: "Ich kann nicht sprechen."

Lefort rescued him from this tight place with a few adroit words. M. Koppenstein, who was acting as *maître d'hôtel,* put His Majesty in another fix by handing him a napkin. At Koenigsberg they only presented ewers at the end of a meal.

The ladies took so much pains that they succeeded in taming him. He sat between them at table, followed by his interpreters, the Prince of Iremetia and Lieutenant Van der Hulst, the son of the merchant of Archangel. And the questions flew fast and thick. "Does he like music?" "No, he sets no great store by it." "Does he love hunting?" "No, he is very unlike his father in that."

"From my youth up I have had a real passion for navigation and fireworks."

And there he is, all worked up and animated. He tells them how he will presently have seventy-five ships. He works himself at building them. He displays the callouses on his hands and asks them to feel them.

Evidently, as the Electresses observe, he has never had a master to teach him to eat cleanly, and they find he has no disposition towards gallantry. But they had imagined much worse of the faces they had heard so much about. "He is an extraordinary creature!" cries the mother. She is delighted to have seen him. If she hadn't she could never have had any correct idea of him. Sophia Charlotte contemplates the Czar who laughs like a child. He holds out his snuff-box adorned with his cipher. His open hand claims hers in exchange. She gives it to him.

Peter rises, altogether at his ease. Let the gentlemen and ladies, to whom he has denied entrance just now, let them come

in! After the Muscovite fashion he hands a glass to each one. The princess calls for the violins. He listens, a little distrustful. Curious, she watched his expression. He liked that. He went and took a glass of wine to the first musician as he had done to the gentlemen of the Court.

Sophia Charlotte urged Lefort to get the Czar to dance. That was her chief desire. Peter consented very willingly. But he would not begin until he had gloves. Had he ever had any? The whole train was ransacked without any being discovered.

Golovin, less formally ceremonious, gave his big hand to the dowager Electress. Wosnizin threw himself at the Countess von Platen. She was horribly painted and pleased him for that reason. Lefort in his turn invited the daughter. The musicians and Muscovite dances were greatly applauded.

Peter warmed up more and more. The company must see his dwarfs, all dressed French fashion, and the ladies found them charming. The coarse jokes of Turgenev on the other hand seemed to displease them. The Czar caught a glint of disapproval in their eyes. That distressed him as much as his bare hands, and at once he belaboured his jester with a great broom. Everybody laughed and was amused, except the hereditary prince George, slender, prim, who was only sixteen years old, and looked this comic sovereign up and down in a most impertinent fashion. Peter caught sight of this and his features twisted with fury. They all fell to dancing again and continued till four in the morning, to part at length equally exhausted with one another.

On the same day the young savage was wandering round about the deserted castle, still hoping to see the fine ladies, who, alas! were fated to come no more. He gazed on the snuff-box, and called angrily to mind the rudeness of Prince George. Gallantly enough he sent four sables and three pieces of damask

to Sophia Charlotte. The Electress was doubtless touched; she was irritated as well. The stuff was ridiculously narrow. Nothing could be done with it but make chair covers.

While Peter started out once more, in haste, someone was looking for him on the highroad. This person had received a letter from Moscow, from the Czar's Chancellor of Despatches, Andrew Vinius, who did not conceal from him the fact that His Majesty had an inclination to introduce the polite manners and customs of Europe into his States. Now he knew a M. Wegellius, who was actively engaged in the reform of the schools, and who would be a most competent person to lead that nation from barbarism. Might he not present him to His Majesty, as well as a learned mathematician, a friend of his, who made burning glasses of prodigious size and power? Was not this M. La Forêt, no, no, he was mistaken, this M. Le Fort, the same man whom Count Palmiera used to see a great deal of years ago at the French embassy in Rome. Could it be arranged, please, for him to meet him again! If necessary he would go and wait at Minden for the embassy to arrive. He desired to be enlightened as to the genealogy of the Czar, and to show him a tree proving how Michael, the first of the Romanovs, was descended in the direct male line from the same head from which the extinct branch of the Czars had descended. Was the big Commissary, who was said to be the cleverest and most intelligent of all, was he indeed the Governor of Siberia stretching to Chinese Tartary? He must, absolutely must, see him. He would like to be definitely informed as to the diversity of the nations under his authority. The other would certainly not refuse to oblige him by procuring for him specimens of the various languages spoken in his territories. For races could, in fact, best be discriminated by means of languages, their harmony or affinity.

This German who was so greatly stirred by the arrival of the

Muscovites was anything but a nobody. His name was Leibnitz, and he believed — not without proof — that he was Slav by descent though he was born at Leipzig. He was a savant of insatiable curiosity and interested in everything. He was interested first of all, in early youth, in the wife of the Dean of the Faculty in his native town, which obliged him to go and pursue his studies at Altorf. At Nuremberg he could not resist his unbounded desire to share in the labours of a group of secret alchemists who were engaged in the search for the philosopher's stone. At the same time he was composing, among the rowdy clatter of inns, a method of teaching jurisprudence. If he has not yet set it down on paper that the intellect is the mirror of the universe, he is demonstrating it publicly. He interrupts the framing of a code of laws to uphold the claim of a prince of the Palatine house to the crown of Poland. He corrects Alstedius' Latin encyclopædia, and immediately after he pores over Descartes, for a definite choice has to be made between Aristotle and this modern philosopher. He proclaims himself a theologian with a book on the Trinity, then goes or rather flies into France to lay before Louis XIV a plan for an expedition to Egypt. While this is being considered he amuses himself with observing certain defects in Pascal's arithmetical machine, and invents a new one. The great King returns his memorandum but forgets to indemnify him for the cost of his journey. A trifle! He consoles himself for this vexation by inventing the infinitesimal calculus. Collaborator in the *Actes érudits de Leipzig,* almost their founder, he divides his leisure between collecting materials for a history of the House of Brunswick and establishing a metaphysical system founded upon the essential nature and the harmony of soul and body. Dreaming of a universal language, he arranges a diplomatic code, maintains against Kulpissius that the title of Grand Standard-bearer belongs to

the Duke of Wurtemberg and not to the Duke of Hanover, which does not keep him from finding time to address to Mlle de Scudéri, then all but a centenarian, an epigram in Latin verses on the occasion of the death of a parrot to which she was devoted.

His latest discovery is important. The Czar, who by the way seems to him a personage in the same category as the Emperor of China or the King of Abyssinia, is travelling with the express design of founding universities in his States. He offers to be his assistant. The great man is miscalculating a little. Impossible to pass so quickly from a Timmerman to a Leibnitz.

Peter's intentions were far simpler and more in accordance with his tastes. It is true he was still keeping them hidden. But already it was divined that he was making haste to attain the mysterious goal he had fixed upon at Moscow. Obviously he was drawing nearer it, for his impatience was increasing from day to day. At Berlin, which the French refugees were transforming into a fine capital, he simply scorned to look at anything. At Hamburg he distressed the magistrates of that port, which carried on a big trade with Archangel, by avoiding the reception they had hoped for.

At Emmerich, before the Dutch frontier, all at once he reveals the great secret! He has slyly tucked himself away among the ranks of the embassy for the sole purpose of going to learn the trade of shipwright in the fabulous port of which Brandt, Arrian Meetje and Captain Musch never ceased talking to him. He can struggle no longer against his passionate longing. They must bring him at once to Zaandam. The embassy moves too leisurely for his taste. So he starts off accompanied only by the interpreter Van der Hulst, the indispensable Menshikov, the Prince of Iremetia, Gabriel Golovkin, Alexander Narishkin and Kurakin.

The owner of the barge Peter hired did not know the way

as far as Zaandam. However, he would take them to Amsterdam, and they arrived there on August 17th. Peter refused to stay in the city, and on Sunday the 11th, at six o'clock, the travellers disembarked in the home county of Brandt.

" Gerrit Kust! " shouted the Czar catching sight of his friend the blacksmith of Voronezh in a small boat fishing for eels.

The smith hastened to run to the *Otter* inn, where the long fur-lined robes of the Muscovites were exciting universal curiosity. His Majesty embraced Gerrit and bade him bring them peasants' clothes.

Once disguised in a red blouse, a short coat, and white canvas trousers, Peter decided to take up his abode with the smith. The other could offer him nothing but a bedroom, a little attic and an outhouse then occupied by an old woman who was induced to leave them by the promise of seven florins that she never received. The place was equipped with a bed, a cupboard with two doors, a table and an armchair. The carpenter Peter Mihaïlov found that amply sufficient. His suite would live in the house of a gentleman named Van der Linde in the Zilvergad.

On Monday Peter bought tools in the shop kept by the widow of Jacob Oomes on the upper dyke, and engaged himself in the shipyard of Lyst Teenwoszoon Rogge. He harassed the foreman with questions, and when work was over paid visits to his acquaintances: the mother of Thomas Josias from whom he accepted a quart of gin, the wife of John Rensen at whose house he had supper and met the wife of Arrain Meetje. Everybody was going strong at Voronezh! The Czar used to employ him, too, on building ships. His name? Peter Mihaïlov.

On Tuesday, always changeable, he won't go to the yard. He wastes his time haggling for a rowing skiff with a house painter who, weary of the discussion, lets him have it for forty florins and a jug of beer. They drink it together in an inn near

Covertoom. Peter goes next to the widow of Musch whose cabin-boy he was once, and in the afternoon with Gerrit he visits oil mills and paper mills, a saw mill, a rope works, a sail-maker's factory, an ironmongery. On the way from Dam to Zuiddejok, he buys plums and eats them out of his hat. A troop of boys follow after him begging for some. He grows angry; they pelt him with mud and filth, and he takes refuge in a state of fury in the inn of the *Three Swans*. Already for mauling a girl in a garden, he has nearly had his head broken with a rake by the gardener. The Regency gives him a guard on Wednesday. People are beginning to chatter. Kust's wife, who is pious and has a horror of lies, bids Gerrit tell the neighbours the truth. Well then, yes, it is the Czar. But they must not repeat it.

On Thursday Peter, who the day before struck up acquaintance with two merchants, Cornelius Calf and Bloem, sails up the Zaan canal steered by the latter, and visits a starch factory. On his return at the advice of his new friend he buys from the draper Noomen a roll of crimson fustian, a cure for rheumatism.

In the meantime, M. Houtman's brother, who had originally sent Arrian Meetje and his companions to Muscovy, disembarked from Amsterdam, where on the Bourse nothing was talked of but the Czar, and with him M. de Jong, a relative of the merchant at Archangel. His Majesty consented to receive them. They expressed their amazement at finding him in such a garb.

" You see it for yourselves," he replied simply.

The same day Peter acquired for four hundred and fifty florins a *bœijer* which he tried next day on the Y with Calf, attracting a following of a number of boats filled with inquisitive sightseers.

On Saturday a newly-built vessel was to be hoisted over

the dyke by means of capstans and a platform on rollers. The burgomaster had urged the Czar to come to see the spectacle. But the streets were crammed with people. He preferred to stay at home, cursing.

On Sunday, the crowd almost besieged his house. Disgusted, he broke his way through them with his fists and feet, jumped into his *bœijer* and fled to Amsterdam, arriving there at four in the afternoon. He stopped at a casual inn by the harbour. They came to fetch him to the mansion reserved for the embassy. A few Muscovite grandees, in advance of the bulk of the convoy, were already living in it.

Thus came to an end his fine dream of being a shipwright at Zaandam. In the poor sailor's room where he first of all hid himself, because of the folk who already recognized his boat, the Czar of all the Russias must have wept like a child.

On the next day, August 26th, the ambassadors made their formal entry into the city. A squadron of volunteers made up of the *élite* of the youth of Amsterdam, and State trumpeters preceded the *cortège*. Four Tartars armed with bows and arrows followed behind as well as twenty-four heiduks in Slavonian costume with silver axes on their shoulders.

In the first state coach Lefort and Menshikov had taken their places; Menshikov, blond, powdered, elegant, delighted to show himself off, and saluting the huge crowd. In the second state coach were Golovin and Wosnizin. The Czar, very simply clad, was in one of the last carriages.

In the next few days the envoys visited the town hall, which the Dutch call the eighth wonder of the world, and the shipyards. In the theatre they saw a performance of the *Enchantment of Armida*, a fairy ballet, and the *Avocat Supposé*, with a splendid banquet followed by a display of fireworks.

During this same night, Peter, highly disgruntled at not being able to work at Zaandam, set off in his *bœijer* to reclaim his tools at Gerrit Kust's.

The feasting was all over now. The disappointed Czar opened his heart to the burgomaster Witsen, who had long ago done His Majesty the service of buying his first ship for him; for which he had thanked him with a naïve and facetious letter from Archangel.

The first magistrate of the city was a man of distinguished intellect. He was learned in everything to do with sea-matters. Besides his *Travels in Muscovy and Tartary* he had written a *Complete History of Ancient and Modern Methods of Building Ships and of the Art of Sailing Them.* He was the author of regulations concerning pilotage and damages at sea. He had perhaps the most remarkable collection of machines in Europe. He was one of the directors of the famous East India Company. Wealthy and generous, he played the part of a Maecenas in Amsterdam. His country's interest in confirming and consolidating the good opinion Peter, more or less by chance, had conceived of Holland did not escape such a man as this. He was ready to serve the designs of the sovereign and to act as his guide. The obstinate young man only wished to be a good carpenter. He would not thwart him in that plan. He asked his colleagues of the India Company to assign lodgings in their shipyard to a " great person " and to give him the opportunity of knowing everything necessary for shipbuilding by having a new galiot laid down and finished under his eyes. The directors made haste to grant this request and put the house of the chief master workman of the rope-works at the " great person's " disposal.

There Peter installed himself on August 30th with the Prince of Iremetia and Apraxin. The table was to be served by the

steward of the embassy mansion. But he was tired of that arrangement before long. He liked to eat just when he felt hungry. So he preferred to look after his own housekeeping himself. Let provisions and wood be sent in to him; he would light his fire and prepare his own meals. He had adopted the name of Peter the carpenter of Zaandam. That was what he was to be called. He wished to live the life of a workman. None the less, he kept his *bœijer* and a coach.

The Duke of Marlborough, who was drawn into Holland by the peace negotiations entered into with France at Ryswick, went to see him, or rather went to look at him.

" Carpenter Peter of Zaandam, help these men to carry the planks," ordered the foreman, so as to indicate him to the Englishman who was observing a little way aloof.

The monarch wrote to the Patriarch: " I am the incarnation of God's command to Adam — ' in the sweat of the brow thou shalt eat thy bread.' "

While this twenty-four-year-old Czar was satisfying himself with these childish, yet touching, games, Witsen placed with him a man of ripe years who had borne his part in the glorious expedition of Ruyter in the Sound, M. Vyselaar, the director of his collection of machines, whom he instructed to assign to His Majesty some tutors worthy of his rank. Albertozsuvan Dam taught him mathematics and the art of navigation; Adam Sils, drawing. Two renowned ship constructors, Cardinal and Jeliozoon, discussed their craft with him continually. Peter filled his notebooks and wrote with all the self-assurance of a Timmerman. " To build a ship, measure the superficial width, and make right angles at the end." No matter! he was full of zeal. Then he was tormented by the desire to learn higher mathematics and astronomy. His whim was indulged. An observatory was erected on the ramparts, and the illustrious physicist,

Hartzeken of Rotterdam, applied himself to instilling some notions of these two sciences into him. Witsen, who was fully absorbed by his official duties and his business affairs, besides the claims of an enormous correspondence, devoted his Mondays to him entirely. The Czar badgered him with questions; his curiosity was equalled only by his restlessness.

On the 3rd and the 5th of September, in a grey coat, a red shirt, an already dirty felt hat, and carrying a new axe-handle for a cane, he went back to Zaandam to his *bœijer* to put Menshikov into the workshop of a mast-maker, and to distribute among other makers of things pertaining to ships, Kurakin, Alexander Narishkin, and Gabriel Golofkin whose brother Michael was set to study the art of making fireworks at Utrecht.

On the 9th, he paid a visit to William the Third, who had also come to Ryswick. He talked to him about the taking of Azov, of his future fleet, of his great plans. On the 21st, he was at sailing races where he met a Vice-Admiral of the school of Ruyter, Gilles Schey. He spent the next day with him, and Schey presented him with a dozen sea charts. In the morning of the 24th, Witsen, accompanied by two gentlemen from the Residency, came to take him to The Hague. For the embassy, which had been expected then for a month, was to make its state entry next day, and the Czar desired to be there, incognito.

The burgomaster was astonished. Peter was wearing a fine blue coat with gold buttons and a hat trimmed with white feathers. Where he is concerned, nothing is alas! simple. He absolutely insists on placing one of his dwarfs in the carriage. The burly Dutchmen grumble, seriously put out. There is no room. Oh yes, if they sit a little close. But no, it's quite impossible.

"I'll take him on my knees," says the Czar.

They had to agree at that, and the coachman whipped up the horses.

Nose glued to the window, Peter suddenly asks, with his finger pointing to a mill:

"What is that for?"

"That is for crushing stones," reply the Dutchmen distastefully eyeing the little man, whose master is pinching his nose and ears.

"I want to go and see it," decides His Majesty.

They get down, knock, hammer. Nobody there!

At Harlem he insists on avoiding the town, because he shrinks from inquisitive folk. They explain that the only road runs through it. He will hide his face in his cloak all the time they are going through.

"What is that great house for?"

"A merchant lives there."

"I want to visit it, too, but let the people all get out of it first."

The carriage is stopped a second time. What time will they get to The Hague?

What is this noise he hears in the cool dusk? They are crossing a river at that moment on a ferry barge. He demands to see it on the spot. His companions inwardly exasperated can hardly keep their patience. The lackeys take down the lanterns. Peter leans over and gazes in the water that reflects the lights.

Now he grows uneasy as to how he will be lodged for the night.

At eleven o'clock they at last arrive at the *Hôtel of Amsterdam*. The bed looks much too good to him. He explores the whole house, and will perch himself in a little chamber in the attic. The Dutchmen, exhausted, take their leave. He catches them up at the foot of the staircase. Frankly he would

rather be lodged nearer his embassy. They mount into the carriage again and go to the *Old Doelen*. There again he hunts for a suitable place. On a skin a Muscovite servant lies asleep. He wakes him up with a kick.

" Get out. I will lie in your place."

Directly he is back in Amsterdam, the burgomaster devotedly takes him to the Texel. The whalers are just coming back from Greenland. He goes on board one of the boats and swears he must go and see the boiler-houses where they make the oil.

At Delft he ransacks the armoury. At Leyden he goes into Doctor Boerhave's dissecting-room. The members of his suite examine with repugnance the uncovered muscles of a body impregnated with turpentine. Let each of them bite the dead flesh, to make them hardy!

Witsen has presented to him Ruysh, the celebrated professor of anatomy. In his study he finds a child's body so well preserved that he kisses it. He goes to his lectures, dreams of wielding the bistoury himself. He is *not* given a license to perform operations; he will make up for that in Muscovy. Between times he becomes a dentist, taking lessons from a charlatan who on market days rips out teeth in the *Botermarkt* with the handle of a spoon or the point of a sword. Equipped with a complete outfit of instruments, from which he will never be parted, he will henceforward take a hand in curing aching jaws.

Truly a universal genius, deserting astronomy he learns engraving on copper in the studio of Jeanne Koerten Block, where he sits for his portrait. In the winking of an eye he engraves a plate: *the Triumph of the Christian Religion Over the Faith of Mohammed*. He is no less interested in the fire-engine force pumps of the two Van der Heydens, father and son. He would

like to carry off these engineers to Moscow, as well as Simon Schynvoet, a pretty poor architect who will, alas! send him his best pupils, and the mountebank Tetje Roen whose obscene farces make the populace laugh. He buys a stuffed swordfish and a stuffed crocodile, and a little affair for boiling water that will later be called a *samovar*.

Seeing that he wants to take everybody back with him, the long ringleted Jews throng round him with full hands. Let him open Muscovy to them and they will give him a hundred thousand florins in ready cash. But the Czar this time refuses. He has been well and duly warned against them.

" But don't let them be sorry," he says, not without a certain wit. " Though they have the reputation of cheating in trade and in everything else, I fancy they would get the worst of it with my people."

His distaste for this race did not prevent him from buying at the harbour a little cabin-boy, the son of a smuggler, whose face he took a fancy to. This Devier, a Portuguese Jew, found a comrade in the sovereign's suite, a Polish Jew, Shaffirov, whom Peter had for the same reason taken from the shop of a merchant in Moscow some time before he came away. How had this fellow made his way into the embassy? Supple and discreet, he tried to worm his way by exploiting his knowledge of languages.

The Czar's restless activity continued to be incredible and incoherent. He studied the art of fortification with Coehorn, and dropping engraving, turned to botany and printing. He desired to be informed of the various procedures that went before and accompanied the execution of a death sentence; he asked Fagel, the Clerk to the States-General, to find him a competent man to organize a State Chancery at home in Muscovy. It was at the banquet that followed on

the signing of the Treaty of Ryswick that he met with him. The presence of Peter incognito barely attracted the notice of the plenipotentiaries. This Grand Duke of Muscovy, who for the first time for many centuries was dining with all Europe, gave them the impression of being nothing but a common labourer.

In the midst of this perpetual agitation the Czar still had leisure to go on his *bœijer* once or twice a week to Zaandam, to see his protégés. Menshikov was applying himself to the best of his ability. Narishkin was making serious progress in navigation. Golofkin, who was familiarly known as Gabriel, had become highly popular. Kurakin was rather a marvel. When his day's labour was ended, he held out his hands to his valet, who poured water over them from a ewer, and then he dressed himself in the costume befitting a lord of his high degree. Peter went to Gerrit Kust's but especially to Calf, and to Louwen, who made compasses and excelled in building models. He ordered examples from most of the makers in Zaandam.

When did he take time to do his carpentering? If he did not actually build the galiot, now at length finished, with his own hands, as credulous people assert, he did work on it. Witsen generously made him a present of it. Peter embraced him and declared he would christen it the *Amsterdam.*

But what was far more extraordinary, was that here the Czar really became the Czar. When he was amusing himself in the *Sloboda,* just beside the Kremlin, he took no interest in the government. Today in this city thousands of versts away from Moscow, he busied himself with everything.

The young man of the Troïtsa had come to life again. He was admirable when he was battling against some one and already against some thing. He had never set any real store

by his authority until the moment when he felt it directly threatened in his person by Tsykler's dagger.

How are the *Streltsy?* Is the building of the ships going forward? And of the two forts at Azov? Have the three hundred guns promised by the King of Sweden arrived yet? And Poland? Is Augustus fortifying himself? How far have they got with the dredging of the port of Taganrog on his new sea? And the works undertaken by Colonel Breckell to unite the Don and the Volga, so as to ensure communication between the Black Sea and the Caspian? Has Augustus sent the miners that had been called for?

He discussed these questions with Romodanovsky, thanking him for his royal letter and signing himself "Your Servant." Or else he called him "wild beast" and recommended him not to give himself up to drink. The Viceroy answered in the same tone and treated his pretended subject as a drunkard. Peter wrote also to Vinius who begged him to purchase arms.

He dispatched to him not only muskets, pistols, cannons, but also sail cloth, compasses, cork, anchors, saws, hammers, tillers. In that headstrong brain, the fixed idea, amid the whirling dance of all the others, remains the strongest: the navy first and foremost.

He offered the post of admiral to Gilles Schey, who declined but presented to him Cornelius Cruys, a man without a peer for shipbuilding, navigation, and the making of sea charts. Not without much difficulty Cruys consented to leave Holland. Peter engaged at the same time Guillemotte de Villebois, a Breton gentleman, observing that "these Frenchmen think they are going to the world's end when they go to Moscow," ship's captains, commanders, lieutenants, pilots, doctors, three hundred and forty-five sailors.

His one dream was to conquer the Crimea. Anxiously he

followed the negotiations that Lefort, Golovin, and Wosnizin were carrying on with the States-General.

The Dutch refused to help in equipping seventy ships and a hundred and thirty galleys. They were just emerging from a long war against France. The ambassadors pressed and insisted, begged for cannon, munitions, a few anchors. The others were obstinate. Later, perhaps, they said. The Bourse intervened, declaring itself averse from angering the Sultan because of their trade with the Levant.

Peter was exasperated. These stupid self-centred merchants were not going to prevent him from having his sea!

In the early part of November he went to spend three days at The Hague with William III. Did he wish to ask help from England? The matter concerned was not less important. The Czar had met, at a cloth merchant's, an Englishman who convinced him that in his country they built ships in a far more scientific fashion than at Amsterdam. Because he always believed the first casual comer who spoke to him about anything whatever, his decision was immediately taken.

His Britannic Majesty declared himself delighted to receive him in his realm, but begged him to defer his visit until he himself should be there in person.

On January 18, 1698, the royal yacht, escorted by three ships of war under Vice-Admiral Mitchell, came to fetch Peter from Holland. A small suite, which included the indispensable Menshikov, but no ambassador, accompanied him on the journey.

At sea the sovereign declared to Mitchell that he would rather be an English admiral than be Czar, so great was his love of the sea. On the 20th, the squadron arrived at Harwich where the traveller went on board the royal barge that brought him to London.

Peter was lodged in a handsome house belonging to the

widow of Charles II. He turned it into a stable in a short time. When, on the 24th, the King paid him his first visit, he was forced to ask to have a window opened, in spite of the cold, because of the revolting stench of the room.

Ten days later, the Czar presented himself at Kensington Palace, which he went through in his own fashion, not looking at a single picture and going into ecstasies in the King's study over an apparatus that showed the direction of the wind. The Marquis of Carmarthen was the person appointed to keep the Grand Duke of Muscovy amused during his stay in England. This angular nobleman was a heroic drinker and the most eccentric character in London. The sovereign and he were accordingly fast friends on the spot.

The Marquis took Peter from the Tower to the Royal Society, from the House of Lords to the Observatory, which could not fail to interest the newly fledged astronomer.

At Oxford the Czar received the title of Doctor of Laws. This was the fourth diploma awarded to him since he left Moscow, for he did not forget to claim that of a master carpenter at Amsterdam. Greenwich Hospital pleased him so much that he could not understand why the King did not live there. A clockmaker taught him to take a clock to pieces and put it together again. He bought a coffin to let the Muscovites see what perfection could be achieved in that kind of work. He consented, since such was the custom everywhere in western countries, to sit for his portrait in the studio of Kneller, a pupil of Rembrandt. He visited William without formality, and was at an entertainment given in his honour at the Palace — behind a hole pierced in the wall of the room. Carmarthen took him also to the theatre. *The Rival Queens* and *Alexander the Great* were less to his taste than the actress Mary Cross, who was his mistress. Never before had he had anything to do with so ele-

gant a person, for servant girls had been enough for him elsewhere. The intrigue lasted till his departure. Yet the fair sex did not make him neglect naval matters.

He had changed his quarters, and was now living by the Thames in a huge house belonging to John Evelyn, whose servant was appalled by the ravages in which the Muscovite indulged. They burned doors and windows, defiled the hangings, slashed the pictures. The Czar slept in the library, and ate in the drawing-room at three in the morning and six in the evening. Dressed like a workman, a pipe in his mouth, he drank beer in a neighbouring tavern and sailed on the river. His time was divided more seriously between the gun foundry of Woolwich and the shipyards of Deptford, where he busied himself with the constructors Anthony Dean and Joseph Ney.

Mr. Evelyn's house had once had a strange occupier, William Penn. Nothing more was needed to make the Czar desire to know some of the Quakers. He listened docilely to their sermons, and questioned two of them, Thomas Story and Gilbert Mollyson. " Are you," he asked them, " in agreement with the Jesuits? " For he could hardly endure that order. Sheremetev, whom the Rev. Father Thyrsis Gonzalès loaded at Rome with friendly attentions, was not so harsh. He swore that he would always have the kindest recollections of the Jesuits, and would say as much everywhere openly. These words of the General awoke the liveliest hopes. Letters were sent to the Burgomaster Witsen and to Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury, begging them to urge the Czar to decree the reunion of the Churches. But the Prelate, who had received the King's commands to accompany Peter, at his request, to various religious foundations and to explain their different dogmas — was he dreaming of becoming a theologian? — declared himself without hope beforehand.

Burnet considered him a man of poor intelligence and a

dirty fellow. His hateful grimaces and his autocratic reflections repelled him. He was a carpenter, not a monarch. Let him go back to his boats.

That is just what Peter did. He engaged sailors and a Scotsman named Fergusson who declared himself competent to superintend a naval school at Moscow. Bad news reached him from his capital. Colonel Breckell, whom he had ordered to dig a canal between the Don and the Volga, had fled with his servant's passport. Boris Galitzin added with high satisfaction that the work was botched. But the deserter wrote in his turn and accused the minister of having constantly thwarted him. The Czar burst into a hurricane of fury. Only his dear friend the Marquis could settle the affair. Carmarthen spoke of it to a Mr. Dummers who knew a very clever engineer, Captain John Perry. Let him be sent for, ordered Peter. And then he summoned Golovin to come and draw up all these contracts.

While he was waiting for the ambassador to arrive, he dealt with a personal matter. He bade Leo Narishkin and Tiphon Streshniev to rid him of Eudoxia. They must force his wife to take the veil! He refused ever to see her again. No doubt Miss Cross was to some extent responsible for his decision. She most certainly did not inspire it. But the new idea of women he had conceived from his contact with the actress urged him to erase from his life the one who embarrassed it.

Golovin arrived in London escorted by Peter Lefort and part of the family of François.

While the big commissary was discussing at Amsterdam with Witsen, who was eager to finish his great work on Tartary, the possibility of getting to the Indies by the North, and while Wosnizin skated at Zaandam in company with the other Muscovites, the favourite took advantage of the leisure allowed him by his master's absence to receive his brother Jacob and

the sons of Ami and his sister Chouet, who had come hastily from Geneva.

They had found him a good deal broader but with a great air. His coat so thick with gold lace that there was no room for more, his plate, his musicians, his trumpeters, most of all the people who in his presence went down with their hands on the ground and their noses a finger-length off it, all this had dazzled them. They had an ambitious desire to see the Czar. Golovin goodnaturedly took them along with him. What struck them most was the perpetual fidgeting of the legs of the sovereign, who in any case welcomed them very amiably.

He was in a good humour. Nearly five hundred persons, all expert and experienced in naval matters, had consented to go back with him. For a round sum he had granted, chuckling to himself at the Patriarch's prohibition of smoking, the right to export tobacco into Muscovy to his dear Marquis of Carmarthen. King William had at last made him a present of his own yacht. Peter did not imitate these generous ways with Mary Cross. The five hundred guineas Menshikov took her seemed ridiculous to the damsel.

"What she gave me was not worth even as much as that," snapped His Majesty.

And on these insolent words he left England.

On May 9th, he was back in Amsterdam. Everybody observed with astonishment that his whole get-up was much cleaner.

Already two hundred and sixty cases marked with the initials P. M. had been loaded on the galiot, and six hundred and forty persons embarked on it for Archangel.

On May 25th, the embassy that had been the cause of so much expense, and that no one was sorry to see go, started on its way to Vienna. It halted for one day at Leipzig, and for two

at Dresden, where the Czar wanted to salute the mother of the Elector of Saxony, his Polish ally.

He insisted that the ladies should appear at the two suppers given him by the Prince of Fürstenberg. Women were beginning to interest him greatly. There he admired lovely Aurora von Koenigsmark, the mistress of Augustus, by whom she had a little boy of two, Maurice de Saxe.

At the end of June, the embassy arrived at Stockerau, four miles from Vienna. The first relations with the Emperor's representatives, who had come to arrange the state entry, were of the chilliest. The manner of their intended reception incensed the Muscovites. An interpreter, coupés, a few trumpeters! Would the envoys of this Imperial Majesty be received like that in Moscow? Lefort flew into a rage. Peter, out of patience, withdrew into a room in the inn, and wrote to Vinius to discuss with him the possibility of erecting a Russian Church in Pekin.

What a court of pedants! When the Czar asked for an audience with his ally, Count Czernin desired first of all to know by what right, and reminded him of the rôle assigned to diplomats and the etiquette that rules over the relations between sovereigns.

A nice lot of airs and graces! The Emperor Leopold, on the advice of Paget, the English ambassador at Constantinople, wished to make peace with the Turks. Peter claimed to keep Azov and to have Kertch. But he would prefer to have the war go on. What would become of his plans for the conquest of the Crimea among these accommodations and settlements. To have spent so much money, to have worked so much in Holland and in London to make a fleet, and not to be able to make use of it!

His Imperial Majesty, full of scornful pity, granted the Czar an audience in the Castle of Favoriten. The two sovereigns were

to enter each by a separate door and come together in front of the fifth window in the great hall. At the third Peter from afar called out a greeting to Leopold. Thus, losing countenance, he was on the point of kissing his hand. He had no idea what to do with his hat. At the end of a quarter of an hour Lefort and he withdrew without having uttered a single word of any utility. They fell to recriminations on the stair. But on their way through the gardens the Czar caught sight of a gondola on a pond. He got into it and began to row.

Wosnizin should be his plenipotentiary in the peace negotiations, decided Peter. Let the ambassador not sign the treaty if by any chance an agreement should be reached!

Next day at the Opera he begged Czernin to arrange an interview for him with the Empress Eleanor Magdalena and her daughters. Gallantly he complimented the princesses on their beauty and asked them how old they were.

Now that was the kind of company he liked! But they pushed Cardinal Kollonitz on to him, the Primate of Hungary, who in obedience to the instructions he had been given brought him to the headquarters of the Jesuits. There he heard a sermon from the Reverend Father Frederick Wolff, who spoke of " the keys with which another Peter shall open another door." Although the Czar turned a deaf ear, this Jesuit who spoke in his own tongue pleased him. To gratify him he granted missionaries going to China or returning to Europe free passage through his States. And after this he dined in the refectory and did not get drunk.

The costume entertainment to which he invited His Imperial Majesty, and at which he showed himself in the dress of a Frisian peasant, and gave his hand to the Princess Jeanne von Thurm und Taxis, bored him. He was eager to flee from that

pompous, frozen court, and to get to Venice at last and see how the galleys were built.

The carriages were already loaded, when a courier who had foundered a score of horses brought Peter tragic news from Moscow. The *Streltsy* quartered near the Lithuanian frontier had mutinied and were marching in a body on the capital.

He fell horrified and appalled into Lefort's arms.

"Francis Jacobinovitch," he entreated, "tell me how I am to get home quickest."

The Admiral advised him to leave the embassy and jump into a post-chaise.

He agreed, dazed and furious together. Romodanovsky would see him sooner than the fool imagined. He wrote him an angry and magniloquent letter. "The seed of Miloslavsky has sprung up once more." It would be the last time!

He dived into the carriage in which Lefort, Menshikov and . . . Shaffirov plunged behind him. Was it because he could speak Polish? Was it to serve as a valet? The nimble little Jew, taking advantage of the turmoil, slipped himself in anyhow.

The people of Cracow had prepared a banquet in honour of His Majesty. Out upon festivities at this juncture. He swept through the city without a halt. But barely a mile beyond the red-brick ramparts they descried a horseman with a long kaftan and a huge beard. Another letter from the viceroy.

"Are the scoundrels at Moscow already?"

The boyar Shein has defeated them by the convent of Voskrelensky. The revolt is suppressed.

By the wayside Peter reflected. Should he go to Venice all the same? No. It would be wiser to go home. But there was no need now for such breathless haste. He was tempted to go and visit the salt mines of Wielieczka in the neighbourhood, one of the curiosities of Europe. It appeared there was an under-

ground city with a church and streets with carts and horses going along them.

What does he hear on the way? Augustus II, King of Poland, is marching at the head of his Saxon troops from Lwow to Kamenez. He wishes to see him. Where is he? At Rawa. He hastens thither. And lo, friendship at first sight! This handsome, elegant man, full of good taste, dissipated, a mighty drinker, with an intelligent, vicious eye, electrifies him.

They spend three days together draining flagons in heaps. They confide their troubles to each other.

Can Augustus count on Peter if the opposing Poles fight against him too much? Certainly.

Can Peter hope that Augustus will keep the Emperor from making a treaty of peace? That is difficult. But the other speaks of a possible war against Sweden. The King is sure of Denmark.

That would not displease the Czar, for the Swedes — does His Majesty know this? — attempted his life at Riga.

How is the seal to be set on such a high affection? They exchange swords and garments. At the moment of departure it is grievous for them to leave one another. Augustus will accompany his new friend forty versts on horseback to be with him longer.

On September 4th, at six in the evening, after having almost slaughtered a metropolitan at Brest-Litovsk, the sovereign arrived in Moscow clad in the King of Poland's cast-off clothes.

He paid a few visits to ministers, forgot to go to the Kremlin, was miserable to hear that Gordon was taking his rest in the country. With Lefort he supped with the parents of Anna Mons. In his mistress's arms he thought only of the *Streltsy*.

He is in a hurry for them to disappear. They will not disappear alone.

PART THREE

CHAPTER ONE

THE day after his arrival in Moscow Peter, who had spent the night in his little Préobrajensky house, went early to the Palace where the assembled boyars awaited him.

He received them well, embraced them, questioned them about everything that was going on; then all at once, pulling a pair of scissors out of his pocket, he darted towards the Generalissimo Shein, seized his beard in his fist and began to cut it off.

In terror Romodanovsky watched him coming next to him. The viceroy was a Muscovite of an old stock. He remembered how the Patriarch Joachim once threatened to excommunicate any man who wore a shaven face. God having chosen to make man in His own image, it was, in short, sacrilege not to preserve external likeness to Him. The wretched man in vain endeavoured to avert the fatal instrument. A whim of the Czar's was not to be opposed.

The terrible young man trimmed the other boyars in the same way. The only ones spared this ridiculous treatment were Prince Tcherkasky, out of deference to his great age, and Tiphon Streshniev. He retained a kind of half filial respect for his mother's old lover.

In honour of his return, Shein invited His Majesty to a great feast. He arrived with his scissors, but this time he laid it upon his fool Turgeniev to carry out the function of barber, contenting himself with laughing in wild bursts and offering apples to the guests, no doubt by way of consoling them.

This rude bumpkin kind of jest was exactly suited to Peter's taste. He had not learned good manners in the West, but he *had* seen shaven faces. So the imitator could no longer tolerate in his *entourage* the hair that flourishes on chins. Besides, as

nature had denied it to him, he always hated that particular adornment.

Meanwhile the Czar did not forget that it was not to cut off beards but heads that he had come back to his capital in such hot haste.

The drawing up of the indictment against the *Streltsy* had been entrusted to Romodanovsky. None the less Peter, yielding to his customary mania for having a hand in everything, directed it himself and did it very badly. This man of impulse, without method, with no sense of psychology, who blindly obeyed his instincts and his hates, was incapable of grasping the hidden motives for others' actions. He had the inquisitor's cruelty; he lacked the delicate penetration of the judge whose aim is to discover the real truth.

So that he might see into the bottom of the mind of the accused, he would seize them by the hair, wrench back their heads, and plunge his fierce looks into the white of his victims' eyes. This childish process of internal investigation he was to employ all his life, whether it was a question of discovering the guilt of a prisoner or the talents of a minister.

In the torture chamber of the secret Chancery, which the Czar never left throughout the month of September, he did not question, he insulted.

His agitated footsteps trampled the ground under which the minced remains of Miloslavsky had been stuffed away. Without ceasing to pull faces, and red with fury, he plied his *doubina,* a big cane with an ivory knob, striking the rebels with it.

" Son of a whore! Son of a whore! " roared Peter, or spat in their faces.

To force them to speak, he had them thrashed with the knout or their backs seared with fire. When they fell silent, half dead

or fainting, he bade the doctors care for them. As soon as they were brought back to consciousness, they were flogged afresh. He meant to have confessions at all costs.

What had happened nevertheless appeared very simple. These ill-disciplined soldiers, who would not endure to be parted from their wives and their affairs, had mutinied near the Lithuanian frontier. Following an ancient custom they had murdered their officers and chosen aspiring comrades to take their place. Excited and angry they marched on the capital. They had been crushed. A hundred and seventy-six of them were executed, and forthwith everything became orderly once more.

What would have happened if they had reached Moscow?

Many *raskolniky* figured in their ranks. Thus they could have reckoned upon the support of the populace, largely made up of members of that sect. Sophia, behind the bars of her convent, was certainly interested in the movement. Adrian in his humiliation had likewise not remained indifferent. The downfall of Peter would have rejoiced large numbers of disaffected persons. But had there been an actual plot? Were these various elements, most of which were hostile to one another, were they agreed together? Had they really devised the plan of setting fire to the *Sloboda,* exterminating its inhabitants, and condemning all the faithful boyars to death? Was it authentically true that popes were to march in front of the troops with icons of the Mother of God and Saint Nicolas? Were they planning, after telling the people that the Czar had died far beyond the seas, to give the throne to the Czarewitch Alexis, to restore the Regency to Sophia and to recall Basil Galitzin from exile?

The Czarevna denied all part in the revolt, and the proofs raked together against her are absurd. Her sister Marpha, not so adroit, gave vent to ridiculous confidences that merely reveal the

perversities of her own tastes. It was in vain and without result that they put to the torture the lover she kept at such vast cost, the deacon Ivan Gabrielovitch, other priests and the personal maids belonging to both princesses. These women lied or said what they were forced to say. In any case was there ever a Muscovite capable of frankly telling the truth?

What matter to Peter! The whole enquiry into the case had been concluded in his head in Vienna already. The seed of Miloslavsky would henceforth spring up no more. He would exterminate this turbulent host, not as was thought, because it summed up the ideas of the past, but because it had always been ranged up against him in his own past. At the moment he did not know what he would put in its place. This revolutionary did not destroy in order to rebuild; he destroyed in order to free himself. As his strength increased so he went on breaking the chains with which his childhood had been laden. He was not judging, he was taking his revenge.

He put down his *doubina* and took up the pen. Robbers, brigands, insulters of the Cross, traitors, transgressors, all the insults mingled with grimaces he had roared out in the torture chamber, he wrote them at the top of the decree condemning the criminals. Inwardly he raged in fury. This long breathless enquiry had disappointed him. For he had high hopes that at least one of those tormented mouths would utter an accusation against his innocent wife.

Leo Narishkin and Tiphon Streshniev had not managed to induce the wretched woman to take the veil of her own accord. Peter himself had failed, in the beginning of September, when, determined to persuade her, he had made her come to the house of his friend Vinius. Eudoxia had recognized that he was the master, that all rights belonged to him. But she declared also that she would never leave the Palace of her own free will.

The laws of the Church protected her, and she claimed the help of the Patriarch, who spoke to the Czar. What crime was alleged against her? Had she not always been a faithful wife? She had taught their son Alexis nothing but to love and fear God. Never had she given ear to the words of the wicked. Peter eyed Adrian with a terrible look. What were these new rigmaroles the other was chanting to him? He had heard enough of them. He gave vent to a huge outburst of fury and turned the pontiff out like the meanest serf.

He turned to put the finishing touches to the judgment on the *Streltsy,* inserting a few additional brutalities, then jumped into the little carriole he always drove himself and went to the Kremlin. Natalia welcomed with delight this brother who had at length decided to get rid of their common enemy. For years she had hated Eudoxia. Accordingly she wished to do something for him. What did he want? Let her go immediately and fetch the Czarewitch away from his mother and take the boy with her to Préobrajensky. He would then put him in his " little sister's " charge. He had never taken any interest in the boy whose birth he had greeted with cries of joy and fireworks, now eight years ago. He had been drinking in the *Sloboda,* he had been building ships, he had been at Azov or in Europe!

Once the kidnapping had been accomplished he hurried to the Czarina's *terem.* An ordinary hack cab, and the filthiest that could be got, was waiting in an inner courtyard. He laid hold of Eudoxia, thrust her into it, flung her dwarf Agatha in at her feet and slammed the door shut. Let the driver take the lot to the convent of " the Intercession of the Mother of God " at Suzdal!

The terrified nuns, whom he had not thought of telling beforehand, saw the ill-starred sovereign, who did not know what fate was in store for her, arrive in this miserable style. What

ought they to do? Eight months later Peter was to send two messengers to tell them. Let them cut off the hair of her who was for the future to be Helen the nun! Let them feed her as they were able! In any event he was determined that she should not cost him a single kopeck.

But from September 29th he considered that his brutish gesture had broken the union he disliked.

Next day began the execution of the *Streltsy*.

That morning early he was in the act of putting on a warm green pelisse, for the first autumn chills were beginning to fall, when that fool of an Adrian, carrying an icon, presented himself once again before him, in his little house at Préobrajensky.

" Czar," intoned the old man, " the Mother of God begs you for mercy for the guilty."

With humped back, wild fierce eyes, with such nervous twitchings of the mouth that it seemed as if his spasm was about to seize him again, Peter bellowed, resolved to put this person in his place and cow him once for all:

" What business is it of yours to come here? I fear God and reverence His Holy Mother. But my duty obliges me to execute criminals. God would punish me if I failed in my duty. Go and restore that icon to its proper place, and do not dare to oppose the course of implacable justice."

This time the Patriarch fully understood. He retired with hanging head. Until his death he would hold his tongue.

" Halt! "

Standing on the threshold of his house Peter stopped with uplifted hand the first of the sledges filled with the condemned as they passed along the street. Every man held a lighted candle, for as no priest was to come near them, the Czar did not wish them to die with neither cross nor candle. Let five taken at random be brought down from the carts. The wretched men,

dragging blocks of wood fastened to their boots, came stumbling forward. Peter had had a stump and an axe brought to him. He tucked back his sleeves, and to the countless trades he had already practised, he added, on September 30, 7206 (1698), that of executioner. Before long, five heads rolled at his feet.

Lightly the Czar sprang to horse, and away to receive on the execution ground the foreign residents graciously invited to this disgusting entertainment. The Imperial Ablegate Guarient, who had arrived in Moscow a few weeks before, was there surrounded by his embassy. Someone lost nothing of the spectacle. This was his secretary Korb, who was in the habit of writing down in Latin every night everything of interest he had seen during the day. Throughout the whole month of October he had to sit up late, for nearly every day beheadings and hangings of a most original kind were going on.

On one occasion the whole court tried its hand at chopping off heads. Lively, smart, bepowdered, Menshikov boasted of having done twenty without getting a spot of blood on himself. The viceroy showed himself no less skilful. A Romodanovsky, the general, whose father was cut to pieces in the first *Streltsy* rising, sent one condemned man taken from each regiment to the devil. Boris Galitzin for his part, made no great hand at the game. He fetched his hatchet so awkwardly down on a soldier's back that the executioner Alexasca had to finish the job for him. Lefort and Colonel Blomberg excused themselves for not being able to take any part in this diversion. It was not done in their own countries.

In the niches of the ramparts near the doors, hooks were fixed from each of which a pair of corpses were hung. " What strange sentries! " cries Korb, who was everywhere.

To ring the changes in these pleasures, another day nose and ears were plucked off from five hundred of the condemned

whose feebleness of age and mind made them not worthy of death. For the guilty priests there were reserved gallows in the form of a cross. It was the jester Turgenev who handled the ropes. Some were broken on the wheel in front of the Church of the Trinity. Peter pestered them, offered them a speedier death if they would make confessions. Their only answer was to spit full in his face.

These traitors had no lack of courage. Many of them, making the sign of the Cross to the four points of the compass, with their own hands drew the noose over their heads and hurled themselves into space to rid themselves of life the quicker. One soldier, named Ivan, nicknamed the Eagle, before laying his forehead on the block, pushed away a head saying: "I have to clear a place for myself here." Peter was so struck with the man's calm that he pardoned him.

The Czar had at first thought of murdering Sophia with his own hands. Lefort persuaded him not to go to this ugly extremity. He would reserve a very special and striking surprise for her. Thirty gallows were erected facing the Czarevna's windows in the courtyard of the convent. Three of the two hundred and thirty corpses gathered in that enclosure held out, in their stiffened hands thrust through the bars of her cell, a petition addressed to the former Regent begging her to resume the administration of affairs.

These agreeable pastimes did not prevent Peter from amusing himself in other ways by night. He went back to the Sloboda. He even accepted an invitation to supper with the ambassador Guarient, stipulating that there should be plenty of ladies invited to the feast as well. Among the first to be asked were Miss Mons and her mother, General Gordon's wife, whose husband was slightly ill at the moment, the widow of General Menzies and Miss Menzies, Mrs. Chambers, Madame

Golovine, Romodanovsky, Lefort and Prince Galitzine

Colombia, the daughter of Madame Hulst, and some colonels' wives. And lovelier than many of them went strutting among the men Monsieur Alexander, as the foreigners said when they spoke of Menshikov.

A little scene took place just as the salad was being served. Golovin refrained from eating any. The Czar, who had drunk too much Burgundy, insisted on knowing why his Commissary for War was behaving so uncivilly.

"I dislike vinegar," replied the big man.

"Bring a flask," ordered Peter, "and empty it into his nose, and cram salad down his throat at the same time. Hold him tight," he said to Chambers.

Poor Golovin kicked and groaned and coughed and bled at the nose.

But what ails His Majesty? He has suddenly turned livid and shivering.

"I've got the colic," he announces.

Lefort, who sees him turn his chin to his shoulder, and fears it may be a violent fit, dashes up followed by Carbonari, his new doctor.

"Pour him out a little of your very best Tokay," says the Italian to the cupbearer.

Peter drinks, feels better, proclaims as much noisily, and bursts out into laughter. Golovin, for his part, blinking his eyelids, is still sneezing without end.

On the rare days when there were no killings, the sovereign, for pastime, organized burlesque processions led by the Prince-Pope Zotov wearing on his head a mitre adorned with an obscene Bacchus. Round about the jovial old man danced half-naked Bacchantes, their heads covered with bunches of burning tobacco leaves. The Czar was now smoking his pipe publicly. Let everyone follow his example and a fig for the Patriarch!

Always practical, he levied for himself a small percentage on the tobacco imported by the Marquis of Caermarthen from England.

On October 31st he celebrated his thousandth death victim by regaling the envoy of Brandenburg, who was going back to rejoin that delightful Frederick, with a dinner and an entertainment of the utmost elegance. Armed with two pipes arranged in the shape of a cross, he distributed his blessing to the guests. After which the Prince-Pope set everybody dancing, himself opening the revel.

As it seemed to Peter a sufficiently urgent matter to counteract in young Alexis, then eight years of age, the effects of the bad education he had certainly received from his mother, the Czarewitch accompanied by Natalia watched this noble jest from behind a curtain. Among the ladies who flocked round the boy and made much of him was Miss Mons.

Anna was already taking rank as the chief favourite. During the siege of Azov she had sent her lover, without getting anything in return, four lemons and four oranges. Today the Czar was paying his debts right royally. He had a little palace built for her in the *Sloboda,* with a fabulous wonder of a room, while the new *Salle Lefort,* made of bricks this time, was being pushed on with feverish haste.

The day after this joyous carnival Peter set out for Voronezh, though there were still a dozen of thousands of *Streltsy* to be executed. He would deal with them when he got back. He could no longer resist the desire to go and admire the great fleet for which he had two years earlier given orders to the States General at Préobrajensky and which by now ought to be nearly ready.

Vice-Admiral Cruys, who had recently arrived from Amsterdam, accompanied the sovereign. This competent sailor ex-

amined the ships, and declared categorically that the work was very poor.

Peter as usual was at first greatly downcast, and then recovered. Energetic and obstinate, he decided to repair and correct the faulty ships and to lay down others in the yard. And fell to work drawing plans. He even, with the same facility with which he had learned astronomy or engraving on copper, invented a new form of keel that everyone hastened to regard as remarkable. He had meant to stay a week at Voronezh, he was to spend two months there, sawing and nailing. He worked so hard that he left unanswered a letter from the Calfs, who signed themselves " your affectionate friends of Zaandam," and begged him to greet Alexander and Gabriel from them. A great dearth of grain was raging in Holland. Could he not send them six thousand sacks? The Czar did send them in the long run, but only after the others had returned to the charge.

His Majesty came back to Moscow in January, and without enthusiasm but without slackness continued to exterminate the *Streltsy*. The task was now being carried out in half mechanical fashion. Every day a thousand heads were struck off. The master's wrath did not spare the families of the traitors. The widows and orphans were driven out of the capital and condemned to die of hunger. It was in fact definitely forbidden for anyone to give them work or even bread.

When Peter was in pursuit of an idea he followed it inflexibly to the very end. Nothing stopped him because he always avoided reflecting upon the consequences of his acts. Thus he destroyed dangerous enemies without perceiving that he was at the same time destroying a numerically considerable proportion of his army. He hardly troubled about it. He still hoped that, thanks to the adroitness of the bitter Wosnizin, the peace preliminaries entered upon at Carlowitz would come to

nothing, that the allies would resume the war, and that he would be able to seize the Crimea with his ships alone. His obstinate mind thought of nothing but the fleet.

In early October there arrived in Moscow the material he had bought in Holland, and the men he had recruited in that country and in England.

He sent the naval specialists to Voronezh and the engineer Perry to the Volga, giving him the task of establishing communications between the Black Sea and the Caspian. But he found it much more troublesome to distribute the various workmen he had engaged on his travels, who had nothing to do with shipbuilding.

For he had no plan for general reform. There he had yielded to his whims. Here he allows himself to be led by circumstances.

At the time of the siege of Azov, being in need of arms, he had interested himself in developing the ironworks of Vierhstour and Tobolsk, and by a logical extension, in the mining industries. After his return he gave them similar attention, and encouraged exploratory diggings at Kazan and at Kaluga where iron had been discovered. Had this extraordinary man eyes everywhere? He merely had to have guns for his ships more easily.

Dominated by his fixed idea, he wanted to have a naval school. With this in view he had brought an excellent Scotsman named Fergusson from London. But this gentleman sought in vain for pupils fitted to receive his learned courses of instructions. Peter had not dreamed that it was first of all indispensable to have textbooks translated into the language of the country, and to teach his future officers the alphabet to enable them to read the textbooks. So he created a few schools and put himself in communication with printers in Amsterdam, and entrusted them with the setting up of a Slavonic typography. However all

this, though hurriedly scamped and vamped together, demanded whole months before it could come to anything. None the less the school of navigation was functioning immediately. He never could see anything but externals, the mere outside of things.

The imitator was obviously in a hurry to copy the West. But for him a European was merely a man in French clothes and without a beard. He began by cutting the hair off his immediate entourage, and insisted on Golovin's coming from Vienna in this disguise, at which big Romodanovsky mocked and jeered his fill. Menshikov, younger and more supple, and himself dreaming only of perukes, shaved the Moscow magistrates with his own hands.

Peter enjoyed himself. He trimmed their faces in the same way that he wrenched out their teeth. Directly he remarked a swollen cheek he pulled out his case of instruments and got to work on the jaw. One day in a merchant's shop he operated on a Dutch maidservant. Another time he exercised his skill on his own valet's wife. Convinced that he had taken lessons in surgery at Amsterdam, he drew fifteen or so litres of water from a wretched woman suffering from dropsy. She died of it ten days later. And he very politely attended the funeral.

The Reformer — so the simple foreigners who had followed him to his States, allured by the fine promises of which not one was to be kept, were calling him already — was preparing at all costs to change the face of Muscovy. The first ukase he signed did in fact disclose vast projects. To frame it he had no need to consult the magnificent plan of government he had asked Francis Lee for, which might perhaps be one day found in his luggage between the stuffed crocodile and the swordfish. On January 23rd, the Czar introduced the use of stamped paper into the empire.

The fleet was costing a great deal and he was short of money. In the nick of time he remembered the sums of money he had spent in the West when he was making his thousands of contracts. There was a good way to fill his coffers.

On January 30th, he discovered another of still wider scope and range. He reorganized the municipalities, granted them an apparent autonomy, endowed them with a Chamber of Burgomasters. He copied England, Germany, and to some extent Holland, all at once. In reality he did no more than change the names of the old offices and strengthen the powers of the tax-collectors.

Whether he was attacking men or things, the procedure was the same. He looked only to the face or the outside. And when opportunity offered, what set him in motion was always the lure of a profit.

As soon as these great questions were settled, carpenter Peter of Zaandam, with his account-book under his arm, went back to earn kopecks in the shipyards of Voronezh. Or how else could he buy himself shoes from the bazar?

An important event obliged him to go back to Moscow on February 12th. For on that evening the new *Salle Lefort* was being inaugurated.

The marvelling guests first of all entered into a room reserved for the banquet, from which they went on through four smaller ones, the first of which, with sumptuous sideboards, was hung with gilded leather, and the second filled with Chinese curiosities. The third hung with yellow damask, contained a bed three ells high embellished with hangings of bright red. The fourth, covered with sea pictures, was adorned with ships hanging from the ceiling. The other ten rooms, which smelt dreadfully of paint, were still waiting to be decorated.

All around the building, on galleries, there were ranged fifty small cannon firing incessant salvoes at the same time as these batteries installed near the Yauza.

A good father, a good brother, and a good lover, Peter had invited little Alexis, Natalia, and Miss Mons to this fête, which included a superb display of fireworks, an obscene session of the " council of high buffoonery " and a ball opened by the Prince-Pope Zotov.

During the whole week's festival rejoicings and entertainments were the order of the day.

Lefort, lively, agreeable, light for all his forty-six years, smiled on the ladies. The admiral had never been so gay, never emptied so many glasses. The Czar hugged and kissed him. He did not forget Menshikov, nor the wheedling hypocritical Anna. Suddenly he stood up, staggering, threw his arms wide. Was he going to have another fit? No . . . it was our brave Sheremetev, back from his travels at last, who made his way into the hall, in German dress according to orders, and wearing on his breast the cross of Malta given him by the Grand Master. Peter's eyes never left this splendid decoration. He even leaned over and fingered it. The boyar declared that his long travels in Europe had been most satisfactory. He described his visit to the Pope, who had given him an excellent reception. Furthermore, he had put down his impressions in a notebook, recording night by night the number of versts covered and his indigestions. His Majesty listened with only half an ear. What a pretty thing that cross was!

On February 19th, in the night, leaving the others rolling on the floor or struggling and kicking among themselves, the man of duty went back to his boats accompanied by Vice-Admiral Cruys and an envoy from Augustus. The keen cold of the highroad speedily sobered them.

A few days later, in the Voronezh shipyards, a dreadful piece of news overwhelmed the Czar. At first he refused to believe it. They had to tell it to him three times over: Francis Lefort had just died suddenly. Was it possible? He had left him so gay and in such high spirits only two weeks ago. What had happened?

The courier explained in low tones.

The Admiral-General Governor of Novgorod had invited to a banquet the envoys of the King of Denmark and the Elector of Brandenburg, not long after His Majesty's departure. The heat in the rooms was overpowering, and he conceived the idea of ending the fête in the open air although it was by no means the weather for it. Next day he had been seized with a terrible shivering fit and a high fever declared itself. The doctors bled him in vain. He lost consciousness. A pastor came to visit him, but delirium had laid hold of him. He turned the good man away and called for wine and music. And on March 2nd, at two o'clock in the night, he fell asleep eternally, after having had time, in a lucid moment, to declare to his wife that he had always loved and esteemed her.

The hatchet had fallen from Peter's hands as he sat on a tree trunk. He wept, his face hidden in both his hands. His sobs choked him. At last he sat up and uncovered his face. Let them make ready his sledge immediately! He wished to embrace Francis one last time. He would give him an incomparable funeral. Like a king's! The courier said a word in the Czar's ear. Not the smallest sum of money had been found in Lefort's house. What an honest man he was! And what a friend! And what an admiral too! Cruys did not smile, for the prince's grief was heartrending. When he loved anyone, he who gave himself without reserve, he loved him well.

As soon as he got to Moscow he bade them open the coffin.

The features of the favourite, clad in his high peruke, were hardly altered at all. One might have said that Francis was about to wake up and call for something to drink. But suddenly it seemed to Peter that something was lacking to the uniform that had been put on the dead man. In the dank mist the tears made before his eyes, he caught a glimpse of Sheremetev and his beautiful cross. Then he cast himself on the body and covered the face with kisses.

He rose up and uttered his orders among his hiccoughing sobs. Let all the sea regiments be assembled for the obsequies! Every officer to wear a black scarf! Put black knots on the standards! Drape the flags in black! He himself will wear black.

Behind the flutes softly playing funeral airs, His Majesty advanced with measured steps, bareheaded, and carrying a halberd. And weeping.

Peter, who could never stay quiet for a single minute, listened, patient and immobile, while the pastor in the Calvinist Chapel pronounced an interminable sermon.

General Gordon, who had been ill for weeks, was not present at the funeral. Was the Czar also to lose the old man whom he affectionately called his father? He felt suddenly very lonely.

He did not even know what he owed to the Genevan, and if he owed him as much as he believed. He contemplated, appalled, the empty place left by that departure.

He had always needed some one in his bed to soothe his fears, his fears that came from his childhood. To satisfy instincts of a kind of twisted femininity, hardly explained by the practice of a shameful vice, he still constantly required a tutelary presence in his life. This cruel despot, so sensitive at bottom, whom Sophia had dominated so long, had the yearning need for submission. Obscurely he wished at least his heart

to be enslaved. Besides, it was impossible for him to act without the moral support of a friend. At the Troïtsa there had been Boris Galitzin. After that there was Gordon, and then Lefort. Even during his travels he had obeyed this peculiar side to his nature. At Amsterdam he had given himself up to Witsen, in London to the Marquis of Caermarthen. At Vienna, although he detested the people of that order he unresistingly laid his hand in the hand of the adroit Jesuit. And, on the road, he threw himself into the arms of Augustus.

It must not be thought, in spite of appearances, that he gave himself to everybody. His mind also seemed to scatter itself but in reality knew but one single aim. His heart seemed to rove, but remained constantly attached to a principal affection. Peter had a faithful disposition.

For years he had loathed Eudoxia and cherished Anna. Yet it was only after he had repudiated his wife that the favourite became conspicuously important. He undoubtedly deceived her with one of her friends, Helen Fademrecht, who wrote to him "My little darling sun, my adored with the black eyes." But because she was the mistress-wife who appeared in official ceremonies, Miss Mons had little to fear.

So the Czar was less concerned to choose a successor to the admiral than to replace the intimate friend he could not live without.

He inclined towards Menshikov. But the man of duty intervened, for in that strange brain everything was terribly mixed. The handsome lad with the soft skin already assumed too many honours without any right to them. His thirsty ambitions must be checked and not encouraged. A simple decision with nothing behind it. Anyhow Monsieur Alexander would have no title.

He showed less wisdom in making Golovin a Grand Ad-

miral. True, Zotov was keeper of the seals! In His Majesty's eyes the former Commissary for War must certainly know all about naval affairs. For his boot soles have trodden the holy ground of Zaandam.

The big man had just had time to install himself at the Admiralty in company with his favourite Yagujinsky, when on March 20th, he became the first holder of the Order of Saint Andrew founded the same day by His Majesty.

If Sheremetev had not been so late in returning from abroad, Lefort would have been the first to have the blue moire ribband and the silver star with the red cross in the middle. The Grand Master of Malta was without a doubt responsible for the creation of the very first of all Russian Orders.

While the new *Salle Lefort* was being inaugurated, a courier despatched by Wosnizin was nearing Moscow at the gallop.

On January 26th, after seventy-two days of conferences, the members of the Holy League had at last concluded a treaty with the Turks at Carlowitz. The Muscovite plenipotentiary alone, obedient to his Master's orders, and in spite of Azov was left in the hands of the Czar, had only signed a two years' truce.

Peter's position was now ridiculous enough. Entirely through his own obstinacy he had not made peace and he had lost his allies. However presumptuous he was, he recognized that he was unable to seize the Crimea by his own unaided power. His great plans were crumbling into dust. He came down to asking himself what use he could make of this fleet that had cost him so many sacrifices. He decided to set up commercial companies similar to those working in Holland. It would be long before they caused any uneasiness to the merchants of Amsterdam.

What complicated matters still further was that the recent conversation by the wayside with Augustus seemed certain to

bear fruit. Although its origin had to do with a lady, the beginning of the coalition preparing in Dresden against Sweden was not due to the gallant King of Poland and Elector of Saxony. It was a gentleman of Livonia, John Patkul, who took the leading part in the game.

Some years before, this person, vexed to find himself supplanted in the good graces of a lady by the Swedish governor of his province, took the affair most tragically. He roused the aristocracy of the country against the power of Stockholm, easily finding more weighty and suitable pretexts. He went at the head of a delegation of a dozen nobles to lay their complaints before King Charles XI. The sovereign heard them in no benevolent mood and ordered his visitors' heads to be cut off. Patkul alone managed to escape. After a period of retirement in Switzerland, filled with a keen desire for revenge, he went on a round of visits to all the courts that had a jealous eye upon Sweden. Augustus, to whom the tempter promised Livonia, and the King of Denmark, who claimed Holstein, lent a favourable ear to his suggestions. Peter was kept well in touch with the preliminary negotiations. The King of Poland strongly urged him to join the coalition. The project pleased him, but first of all he had to deal with the Turks, for he could never face two enemies at the same time.

He now saw that he had behaved most stupidly at Carlowitz. Quick to change when his interests called for it, he began to desire ardently the very same peace that some months earlier he refused to hear a word of. The matter was a simple one. He complicated it uselessly by deciding to send his ambassador Ukraintsev to Constantinople by sea, which in advance made the Porte concerned to ensure that no flag but its own should float on the Black Sea.

During the summer the Czar got twelve ships together and

himself went on board the *Scorpion*. The squadron speedily showed itself in front of Kertch, and requested the Pasha to grant free passage of the Strait for the Ambassador's frigate. Peter was disguised as a sailor, and was arrogant enough to think he could judge at a glance the power of the Turkish ships; he took his place in the skiff that conveyed the officers in charge of the parley. After ten days of difficult negotiating permission was granted. The Czar went off to Moscow again, and the *Krepost* of forty-six guns set sail for Constantinople. She was the best ship in the fleet. Even so she took in a good deal of water in the course of an extremely calm voyage. Once in the Bosporus, Ukraintsev hastened to give the Ottomans a fresh idea of the tact of the Muscovites. He let off salvoes of guns towards the Sultan's palace in the dead of night, thus waking the seraglio, which uttered lamentable outcries of terror.

It was high time for Peter to think of civilizing his people. He thought he was doing so by publishing two ukases, directly he got back to his capital, which proscribed beards and imposed on everybody except the clergy and the peasants, the necessity of wearing European costume. Models of the new garments were displayed, fastened to planks, in the streets. The sentries on the ramparts later had orders to cut the hair and beard and to shorten the sleeves and skirts of the caftans of the disobedient. Five years respite was granted the poor to allow them to wear out their present clothes. And of course a whole list of fines and penalties was provided.

This reform, wide-reaching and colossal by reason of its scope, which for that very reason struck with astonishment the whole Western world, admiring and amused, was nevertheless without significance in itself. In reality there is no relation whatever between the degree of civilization enjoyed by a

country and the costume of its inhabitants, which is always adapted to the climate. All the same this reform was still useful and important because it indirectly attacked absurd prejudices. Did Peter, whose eyes alone directed him, take this into consideration? Without a doubt, for here a hidden motive swayed him: to make a breach in the already weakened authority of the patriarch. The previous year — and this was fated to be his last audacity — Adrian fulminated a rousing anathema against the shaven faces of heretics. The orthodox obeyed the sovereign, but enjoined upon their heirs to lay their severed beards in their coffins so that they might hand them in to St. Nicholas at heaven's gate, by way of passport. The *raskolniky,* less accommodating, refused to submit. Peter was tired of fighting them before they were tired of resisting. He gave way to their stubbornness, but always practical and jocose he demanded a special tax from them and forced them to wear a medal carrying the inscription " A beard is a ridiculous adornment."

It was not merely to foster the business of the " flea market " and make the fortunes of the tailors that His Majesty had come back from Kertch. Augustus had just sent him the Saxon general Karlowitz again, accompanied this time, under a borrowed name, by that fine talker Patkul. It was a question of urging Muscovy to enter the coalition.

The Elector of Saxony said he was ready to declare war on Sweden at the same moment as the King of Denmark. He would conduct his operations in Livonia and in Esthonia. They asked Peter to attack further north in Ingermania and Karelia. Patkul insisted greatly on this point, and mysteriously revealed that a plot would break out at Riga on the opening of hostilities. The Czar in the friendliest way approved of everything. But he warned the others that he would not take the field until he had definitely concluded a peace with the Turks.

On November 11, 7207 (1699), full of hidden forebodings and with heart beating high, he signed in his little house at Préobrajensky a secret treaty of offensive and defensive alliance with the envoys of Poland and Denmark.

Easy to understand that his hand shook. Since the suppression of the *Streltsy* he possessed, outside the Cossacks and the undisciplined bands collected by the boyars in case of war, only four regular regiments: the *Préobrajensky,* the *Semienovsky* and the two belonging to Lefort's brigade.

Well then! he will build up an army for himself just as he has already built up a fleet. The method is always the same. Something happens, a small thing or a great thing, that calls for his intervention: and he acts. A fire had laid waste several quarters of Moscow in the course of this winter; he decides that for the future houses shall be built only of bricks. A Livonian gentleman has been unlucky in love, and Sweden so strong since the days of Gustavus Adolphus has to be laid low; he will create regiments. He is like a lever that, to move the future, needs a fulcrum.

But is there any idea at the back of that head? Peter has a passion for the sea, and he wants a proper sea coast. He had thought to find this in the Black Sea. Circumstances are changed, and he is given reason to hope for it in the Baltic; his unchanging, immutable desire is content to swing round on a pivot. None the less he keeps the bedrock intention to extend later on his southern conquests now interrupted.

At the end of summer, while the conversations with Karlowitz and Patkul were going on, he signed numbers of officers' promotions. All the *poteshny,* from Buturlin, who became a major-general, to Menshikov made lieutenant of bombardiers, went up in rank. In setting about the task of procuring soldiers Peter did not copy foreign countries. It was the first time he

failed to do so. He established obligatory military service. He was in a hurry. Above all he had this advantage over other sovereigns who clung to the principle of enlistment, that he was quite literally and precisely the owner of his country. Here he took advantage of the Czar's right to dispose of his subjects and their property exactly as he pleased. The summons was not an individual one. Each community was called on to provide a percentage of its men. In short, he repeated with the army what he had done in the case of the navy.

The first recruits began to arrive at Préobrajensky in January. He formed them into sixteen regiments of infantry and two of dragoons, organized in two divisions commanded by the generals Artamon Golovin and Adam Weyde, old *poteshny*. Prince Reprien, also an old *poteshny,* received the order to pick up from the towns along the Volga the elements of a division of nine regiments, the officers of which were to be chosen solely from the nobility. Elsewhere the help of foreigners was largely employed.

All the troops were to have the same dark green uniform, wear low three-cornered hats, and be armed with muskets.

There was one who had often drilled and manœuvred these men of twenty-five to forty, who had then been beardless boys with fur caps and bundled up in caftans, but who would never behold them in shoes and stockings, with perukes, with sword at side and adorned with the insignia of their rank.

On November 29th, old Patrick Gordon died in his bed. Peter embraced him like a son, gave him a splendid funeral, and then went back to his work, not without declaring to the general's widow, with sincere emotion, that no one would ever again serve him as well. He was too modest. He forgot himself. He had at least himself left.

As on every occasion when his eyes saw a clear aim he wished

to achieve, his enthusiasm and energy were magnificent. At this moment when he was preparing to launch himself against one of the great representatives of Europe, an ally of the King of France, it might seem as though he was seized with the same shyness that had made the barbarian want to put on gloves to dance with Sophia-Charlotte. He was smitten with a kind of eagerness to give his nation a more western appearance.

On December 20th, 7207 (1699), he published an ukase worthy of attracting the attention of the whole civilized world. The year would henceforth begin on January 1st and not on September 1st, and the European reckoning was to be adopted as well. A *Te Deum* was chanted for the New Year in the Cathedral of the Assumption. It was not Adrian, but a more supple prelate, Stephen Yavorsky, the bishop of Riazan, who conducted the ceremony.

This measure was greatly criticized. The Gentiles who were so unwisely imitated were asses, explained the old Muscovites, and they proved it. For God, being all-wise and all-good had assuredly created the world in autumn, when the earth is covered with grain and ripe fruits, and not in winter when there is nothing but snow.

Timmerman's old pupil, who had some vague notions on differences in latitude, did not waste time on persuading them. Ugly popular rumours flew about. He knew that, in moods of fanaticism, no one thought anything of murder or poisoning in his states. So he signed two ukases forbidding the carrying of pointed knives and the unrestricted sale of medicines and herbs. And in this way he was led to establish the first apothecaries' shops in Moscow, under the surveillance of the secret Chancery.

He continued to give a European guise to his administration. The offices became *colleges;* he changed the names of the high officials; he had a council of ministers; he dreamed of a code.

He ordered a reminting of the coinage, and struck good coins before issuing bad. He had greater and greater need of money and shrank from no expedient. Henceforth merchants were to pay him the rents they had heretofore paid to the lawful owners of the markets.

Patiently, in contrast to his normal disposition, he waited for news of Ukraintsev who was not bringing matters to a conclusion in Constantinople. His Danish and Saxon allies defeated by Charles XII, were begging him to make haste and join them. He reminded them of the terms of their agreement. He was not to take the field until peace had been signed between him and Turkey.

Meanwhile the Swedish Resident Knipercron was growing uneasy about all these armaments. Were they not destined to be turned against his master? Peter calmed his apprehensions. It was a very simple matter. He had suppressed the *Streltsy;* he was now replacing them.

At Voronezh, where on April 20th he had just dissolved the famous trading companies, for he was tired of having the Dutch laughing at him, he once more soothed the fears of Mlle Knipercron.

" How can you imagine, my dear young lady," he exclaimed indignantly, " that I would consent to begin an unjust war and break an eternal peace that I have just confirmed."

He embraced her father in public, and declared most convincingly that if the King of Poland were to commit the crime of seizing Riga, he, the Czar would not abide it. He would go himself and take the town from him to give it back to the Swedes.

Ah! he had other cares in his head than fighting. On June 14th, he laid down by ukase the new fashions and styles for women. And his sister Natalia was the first to show herself

clad in the German way. The better to dupe his future enemy, what more could he invent? He instructed his ambassador at the court of Charles XII to repeat to the King his pledges of friendship.

These dangerous words were to earn the Muscovite envoy eighteen years of prison, and death in captivity.

Meanwhile peace was concluded at Constantinople. Peter learned of it on August 8, 1700. At once, and faithful to the strict letter of the treaty, he declared war on Sweden. In his manifesto he recalled and set out the affronts endured at Riga long ago. It was to avenge these, he maintained, that he was taking up arms. And he set out for the frontier. But — we now know his honour and trustworthiness — he did not direct his troops northward, in accordance with his solemn promise. He made them march due south towards Livonia. He was preparing to lay siege to Narva, which eighty-four years earlier his grandfather had been forced to give up to Gustavus Adolphus.

CHAPTER TWO

THE King who was then reigning over Sweden and all the lands washed by the Baltic, — Finland, Ingria, Karelia, Esthonia, Livonia, and Pomerania, — was a young man of eighteen. The age of Charles XII was no stranger to the desire that had taken his enemies to steal his provinces from him. They knew nothing then of the steely temper of the untamed, haughty spirit of that bear-slayer, who swiftly revealed himself as the greatest fighter of his time.

Tall, well made, long of face, he wore but seldom over his short chestnut hair, combed only with his fingers, a little peruke, the hair of which was knotted behind in a little bag. He had a black crape cravat, shoes almost without heels, and his coat of plain blue woollen cloth with brass buttons displayed very greasy skin breeches. His shirt and wristbands were generally very dirty. He wore cuffs and gloves only on horseback. From a narrow belt of buff leather hung a sword of portentous length and weight.

In the courtyard of the house, preferably repellently dirty and gloomy, he chose for his headquarters, there was always a saddled horse with unkempt tail and rough coat. He was passionately given to riding. He readily covered ten or a dozen German leagues in one day, galloping so hard that no one could keep up with him, and covering himself with mud like a post-boy. Or else he would play gravely with his three dogs, Caesar, Pompey and Snushanen.

At table he sat in the first chair that came handy, ate quickly, drank only small beer, and said not a word during the meal. He slept without blankets, and the under-mattress pulled over him served as a quilt. Beside his bed might be seen a fine gilt Bible that was the only article of any show in his whole equipment.

Taciturn, austere, highly educated, often carrying on a conversation in Latin, dirty through carelessness, listening to no advice, equally heedless of rest and the trammels of diplomacy, he was still, though the vigour of his blood was unmistakably conspicuous from his childhood, chaste by his own choice. He declared that he was wedded to his army in life and in death.

This iron personality was endowed with an affectionate heart full of politeness, agreeableness and love for the members of his own family. Every week he wrote to his sisters on shapeless scraps of paper that were all over finger-marks and covered with blots.

He adored war but cared little for its gains. His one fear was to be without enemies. When later he was advised to take the crown of Poland, he replied that for his own part he didn't want to take anything and would rather give to other people.

Charles was at Stockholm when the declaration of war took him by surprise. He crossed the Sound immediately. On the point of disembarking and in sight of Copenhagen, he plunged into the water and swam ashore in his eagerness to fight and his curiosity over the meaning of the perpetual buzzing he heard in the air, for he had never before heard the whistling of bullets. He overthrew the Danish King at the very gates of his capital and imposed on him — a fact Peter knew nothing of — the peace of Travendal. He roughhandled Augustus and was determined not to make an end of hammering him until he had set Stanislas Leczinsky on the throne of the Republic in place of the Saxon.

In October he learned that the Czar was besieging Narva, and set off to deliver the town. He forgot that to the forty thousand soldiers of the enemy he could oppose only five thousand men and three thousand horses, that winter was

coming on, and that he would have to go through a real desert, by forced marches dragging his provisions and his munitions.

Mounted on a mud-covered horse, his face set and his neck tightly swathed in his crape cravat, he pressed forward.

More naïve than presumptuous, Peter had imagined that he would carry Narva as easily as Azov.

From September 23rd, he began to invest the fortress with Adam Weyde's and Artamon Golovin's divisions, and a strong contingent of Cossacks, and a month later he started a bombardment. The noise was the only thing that troubled the Swedes. The Muscovite guns were worthless and were badly served.

The Czar, who had rather strangely installed his headquarters on an island, no doubt to get opportunities for a little boating, had wild hopes of a speedy capitulation, and, what was more likely, of the arrival of Repnin and the third division, when on the night of November 17th, he was informed that Charles would be up the next day. The news stunned him. He had believed the other hundreds of miles off. He thought of nothing but flight. The admiral Feodor Golovin, whom he had made a few months earlier his Foreign Minister, and whose one wish was to place his person out of danger, strongly advised flight. Everybody lost his head and all behaved like poltroons. The Saxon generals Allart and Langen, who were present at this embarrassing scene, were disgusted.

"These folk," growled Allart to himself, "have about as much heart as there is hair on the belly of a frog."

Peter was in a daze, hunting for something. Was it his courage? No, a commander-in-chief. Augustus had just sent him Prince Charles of Croy with the mission to keep him informed of his movements. The Czar on the spot designated him

to take command of an army that a few hours before the Prince had never even seen.

The orders His Majesty, who never stopped restlessly moving about and draining glasses of vodka, dictated to him in his tent were inept and even worse than that. He insisted that Croy should not deliver the assault until he was in possession of munitions that could not possibly be ready for some days, and at the same time that he should try to capture the fortress before the arrival of the King of Sweden whose approach was the very thing that was making him decamp. Always disingenuous, the Czar omitted to date his instructions. He simply could not, by a last stroke of ill-luck, lay a hand on his seal. Was he completely drunk or was he preparing an alibi? He was as a matter of fact now keeping his diary, with many scratchings and alterations, in which from the very first pages there is an abundance of lies.

" That a soldier! " Allart exclaimed scornfully later, seeing only one of the baser sides to his character.

At last, at three in the morning, remembering what is the most popular of his country's proverbs, " To run away is not very honourable, but it's very healthy," he jumped into a carriage, whimpering and with teeth chattering, with Feodor Golovin and Menshikov. He went to Pskov. He had not yet invented an excuse for this desertion. The reason he invented later was a pitiful thing: he was off to meet Repnin and beg him to make all haste. In what direction?

On November 20th, in early afternoon, under a sombre sky that presaged snow, Charles fired two white rockets. It was the signal for attack. He was driving before him his troops exhausted with fatigue. Half an hour later the Muscovites were surrendering at discretion.

Among the prisoners were the Generals Golovin and Weyde,

Prince James Dolgoruky, Generals Allart and Langen, Colonel Blomberg in command of the *Préobrajenskys,* Buturlin, the gunner Casimir de Crage, Pierre Lefort, nephew of Francis, a son and a relation of Gordon.

The booty was considerable. A hundred and forty-five quite new cannon, twenty-eight mortars, and one hundred and fifty-three flags, twenty standards, an enormous quantity of war materials and provisions, and the army chest containing 263,000 crowns.

Sheremetev's cavalry corps, which was operating on the flank, alone escaped completely. None the less Peter had lost everything, even honour.

At the news of the disaster, which he learned on his way, he began again to groan and moan, forbade any one to speak of the war to him, disguised himself as a peasant. Everywhere behind him he saw the shadow of Charles looming up.

Pskov did not seem far enough away; he took refuge in Novgorod. He was ready for an accommodation. Miserable and entreating he turned to the States General of Holland, to England, to the Emperor. He lied brazenly to Europe, which had greeted the unprecedented defeat of Narva with laughter and derision. At Vienna his ambassador, Peter Galitzin, put a different face on the story and declared to the ministers that "His Majesty the Czar had no need to give proof of his military glory by victories." Out of pity, offers were made of intercession to obtain peace for his master. What were Peter's conditions? The cession of Narva and almost the whole of Livonia.

At the Hague Andrew Matveiev declared that the King of Sweden had been beaten, surrounded, ready to surrender, when he had treacherously seized the envoys sent on the parley, in violation of his given word. The troops were then obliged to retire, which they did in good order. The cause of this check

was further attributed to a certain Goumort, a Swede by birth, who had deserted from His Majesty's army on October 10th.

Already the deserter Jansen had been regarded as the chief cause of breaking off the siege of Azov. Peter always repeated himself. And always, after the first moment of despair, the man of energy ended by casting out the coward and the weakling.

At the end of December, because Charles failed to pursue him and set up his winter quarters, the desires of this weathercock head had already shifted about. He thought no more of peace; he would continue the war. And he set to work again. He founded six new regiments, which were to be a useful addition to Repnin's division and Sheremetev's corps, which were still left. He did not stop there. In his primitive mind there dawned at this moment an idea of far-reaching scope. He confessed that he regretted his behaviour at Narva. In very truth he regretted and did not regret. Utilitarian before everything and utterly devoid of that chivalrous spirit which is the honour of Europe, for he remained a barbarian in spite of his travesties of the West, he judged it better to be free in Moscow, even mocked and lampooned by the journalists of Paris and Amsterdam, than to be in chains in Stockholm. And from a certain point of view he was not wrong. What vexed him deeply was not to have done his job of work as a soldier. He who wished to be a man of duty recognized that at Narva he had simply stolen the sums he wrote in every month in his account book. A Captain of bombardiers is not given his pay to refuse to fight. He had not carried out his task; nobody had carried out his task. The weakness for which he was blaming himself was a weakness of his race. The child, the born revolutionary, had the sense of duty already because it contradicted his instincts. The Czar would apply himself to strengthen that sense of duty

in himself and to inculcate it in his subjects, at least in those who surrounded him, as always interesting himself only in what he saw with his eyes. It was suddenly revealed to him then that the value of an army is not merely a matter of the number of men and guns that compose it. Perhaps he would one day understand that neither is it enough, in order to civilize a country, just to force the people to wear breeches and perukes.

While giving himself up to a little reflection, not a very frequent thing with him, he did not forget to reconstruct his artillery. He had the greatest iron foundry in the empire built, at the cost of the State, at Neviansk-Kamensky. And as there was a shortage of metal, he gave orders to dismount the bells from the churches and the monasteries in the towns. There was no longer any need for him to be careful. In the previous October, while he was at Narva, Adrian had had the good sense to die.

The pontiff was never replaced. Between the patriarchate and Peter there had been an old account to settle, ever since the affair of Marcellus. More fitted to pull down than to build up again, he had as yet no idea how he would deal with it. At any rate there would be no council. To hold the office he appointed the complaisant Stephen Yavorsky, with the simple title of exarch. And at once he took the administration of the religious houses away from him. It was transferred to the jurisdiction of Mussin-Pushkin, who had taken none but blasphemous vows, for he was one of the eminent members of the " council of high buffoonery."

But there was no mocking intention in this. He was looking only to practical objects. There were too many monks and nuns who were neither monks nor nuns. The Czar feared that the tendency to take refuge within the walls of a religious house

on the part of the men might be accelerated and deprive him of useful units, in proportion as he was to call upon his people for more soldiers. Accordingly he issued a decree to take a general census of the members of the monasteries, and asserted the right to verify enterings and leavings. At the same time he confiscated the revenues of the different foundations, which were for the future to be distributed among them by Mussin-Pushkin's department. From these pooled sums were in the first instance to be levied the amounts necessary for the maintenance of the sixty hospices, which the Czar, who had admired the magnificent institutions he had seen in England and Holland, had decided to establish in his capital, with the twofold design of imitating the West and throwing a mask of charity over his despoilings.

It is obvious that, with his peculiar notions of honesty, he would never hesitate to dip into that till when he needed money, a thing that sometimes happened to him.

He was seen to be stoutly resolved to carry on the war rigourously. He did not neglect his allies. To Copenhagen he sent an embassy instructed to rouse the Danish King, but which was not very successful. He himself, on January 31, 1701, accompanied by Shaffirov, for the little Polish Jew, keeping tenaciously to his chosen path, had become his secretary, jumped into a carriage and went to visit Augustus at the Castle of Birze in Lithuania.

The two sovereigns had not met since their rapid interview at Rawa. Peter retained an unforgettable memory of the Saxon, whose prestige was still untarnished in his eyes. And besides they were born to understand one another. Who could tell which of the two was the greater liar?

The King of Poland had a taste for intrigue and a passion for treachery. He fostered and turned an ear to Patkul originally

because he was a traitor. The Czar pleased him because he divined that he was a simple minded person easily carried away, when his interests egged him on, into the darkest and most devious paths. Before coming to Birze he had tried without success to obtain a separate peace from Charles.

Augustus divided himself equally between politics and love. Love he could inspire, but was incapable of feeling. In a mistress he sought only for the pleasure of deceiving her, and fancied he enjoyed it afresh by flitting changefully from one woman to the next. His brain, which was luckily dulled at times with wine, was like those embroidery frames on which the threads are covered and uncovered without a pause. As is so often the case with persons whose hearts are sapless or false, he was gracious in manner, amiable of temper, and showed himself exceedingly gay and merry.

Nothing more was needed to make Peter take him with complete seriousness. The Czar arrived one Saturday at Birze. The sovereigns amused themselves by shooting at a mark with cannon. The King hit the target twice; the captain of bombardiers missed it with every shot. At night all Poland was drunk because Augustus was rolling under the table. He found it impossible next morning to rise and go to Mass. Peter presented himself at the service alone. Full of curiosity he badgered his neighbours with continual questions, for he had only once before, in Vienna, had the opportunity to be at a Roman Catholic service.

At the banquet that followed, the King observed that a silver plate was not clean, he crumpled it up like a scrap of paper and flung it behind him. The Czar at once copied him, and started to make wagers. Which of them had the strongest grip? They would have ended in eating off the tablecloth if a bright idea had not shot through Peter's mind: he would like to do

the same to the King of Sweden's sword. And their deliberations began.

As Augustus was acting only in his capacity as Elector of Saxony, vain efforts were made to persuade the Vice-Chancellor of Poland to enter the alliance. The other asked to be informed as to what advantages the Republic would get by this. Would His Majesty consent to restore Kiev and Smolensk? Peter had an interview also with Le Héron, the envoy of Louis XIV to the King of Poland. Both sides were deceiving themselves. The diplomat saw in this barbarian only a mercenary who might be brought to serve the King of France in return for pay. At Moscow, although beaten and suffering from ridicule, they had a much loftier notion of themselves. The conceit of these savages, an eternal trait in their race, was beyond all bounds. Feodor Golovin dared to write to Le Héron that " the union between those two heroes of the age would assuredly be a matter of the highest admiration to the whole Empire." The second hero he spoke of was the wretched fellow who, in the eyes of the civilized world, had disgraced himself at Narva!

After three weeks of conferences, Augustus and Peter renewed, on February 26, 1701, their treaty of personal alliance and decided to lay siege to Riga.

Presents were exchanged between them, as well as their signatures. The Czar received a pair of swords and a pair of horses; the King had two Chinese horses, tapestries embroidered with gold and some pieces of Japanese porcelain.

On March 8th, His Majesty was back in Moscow. He ordered Repnin to march at the head of his nineteen regiments and effect a junction with the Saxon troops. Sheremetev was to continue to keep watch on the Livonian frontier from Pskov. After this Peter went down to Voronezh with Anna Mons for three months, to play at the gallant carpenter. He installed

himself at Novgorod during the summer, ready if need should arise, to carry aid to victory. He reached his capital again without having been called upon to disturb himself.

Count Eric Dahlberg had given a sound thrashing in front of Riga to the besiegers, who had decamped by July. To make up for this defeat the Czar made a triumph out of the capture of a little boat that had gone ashore in the harbour during an unsuccessful attack by the enemy fleet on Archangel.

In the meantime, Charles, resolved to smash Augustus before dealing finally with the hero of Narva, occupied Birze and Courland. Shermetev took advantage of this. He crossed the frontier, carried out a bold raid, and won a success at Erestfer on December 29th.

Moscow was illuminated; fireworks were displayed; the general was raised to the rank of field-marshal; and round the Kremlin, devastated by the June fire that had not spared the palace, they paraded the few Swedish prisoners with the utmost pomp. Then they sold them in the market for from three florins to thirty.

" No such thing as small profits," the Czar must have thought, always an Asiatic monarch in spite of his darned stockings and his gentlemanly sword. But there are nothing but great victories! " When they have had the very least little success," writes the Dutch Resident, " they make such a noise and fuss about it that you would think they had overturned the whole world."

In any case things were going very ill for the King of Poland. In January 1702, trying to save his throne, he thought he had found a way of getting round his implacable opponent. He sent him, not an ambassador, but a very lovely ambassadress, his old mistress, Aurora von Koenigsmark. To ring the changes on his strange pleasures, today he wished her to be unfaithful

to him. Charles declined to see her. He was as much aloof and averse from women as he was from peace. The countess took her revenge for her check by putting together a revealing sonnet.

Conseillé de quitter la guerre pour l'amour,

cries the lady before explaining to the prince that the flames inspired by that passion would warm him more pleasantly than the red-hot cannon balls placed in the tent in which he was sleeping this winter.

But Charles preferred to shiver alone between his dirty mattresses and read his gilt Bible. He was wedded to his army and would never be untrue to his bride.

" What a queer fellow! " sighed Augustus, who knew nothing of such scruples, or any others.

The victories of the King of Sweden in Poland did not make Peter uneasy in reality. The blows his ally took were to him just so many blows avoided. The enemy was treating him like a supernumerary on the stage; he made good use of the respite. He increased his army; he organized his bases. The fighter in him was of no account, but he did know how to create the instrument he was incapable of using himself. In this task he displayed real and positive qualities. To begin with, he had no prejudices. Three years before he had destroyed the *Streltsy,* today he revived them and made four regiments of them just like the old ones. Muscovy teemed with idiots clinging to the old customs. When you need everybody, you must not turn anybody away!

This momentary concession to the past was a pure piece of policy. It proved that Peter, who was now thirty years of age, actually engaged in reflection more often than before. But none the less he continued to ask help of every kind from foreign countries. He brought spinners, weavers, and dyers

from Amsterdam. Henceforth, instead of purchasing in Holland and in England the woollen stuffs needed for clothing his soldiers, he would only buy wool. Forced to consider his never-ending money troubles, he judged it more economical to make the cloth at home. He reasoned in the same way about the sail canvas for his beloved ships. Menshikov, who had turned into a man of affairs, and whose position as favourite allowed him to find capital without difficulty, hastened to set up a factory to weave canvas. Peter was touched even to tears. Golovin jealously watched with glowering eyes this rival who was much too active. Had not the Polish ambassador the year before presented to Monsieur Alexander, at the same time as another to His Majesty, a handsome French embroidered coat, without troubling about the admiral!

The Czar paid little heed to these palace squabbles and feuds. By a manifesto dated April 16, 1702, he anxiously called for officers from Europe. He had not as yet discovered a way to manufacture courage and military science within the Empire. He created a commissariat-general in Germany to accept enlistments. He promised everybody, except the Jews, the free exercise of their religion. Basil Galitzin, following a similar design, had twenty years before used exactly the same language. Peter copied always and seldom invented anything. But he knew how to adapt himself to circumstances. And circumstances had changed since the days of Sophia. Europe persisted in remembering the defeat of Narva. Even the mercenaries of the West had a sense of honour. So those brave folk had to be lured and inveigled. His Majesty laid it on Baron Huissen to win over public opinions beyond the frontiers. That future tutor to the Czarewitch translated and expanded his master's ukases with reference to the army, composed pamphlets in which Charles XII, more easily than on the

open field, was beaten in every page, subsidized a newspaper in Leipzig at great expense, and persuaded writers and men of science to dedicate, for handsome rewards, their works to the Grand Duke of Muscovy.

It was not enough to attract the foreigners, it was further necessary to try to keep them. Assurance was offered them that they would not be subject to the justice and the penalties of the country, and that they would be under the sole jurisdiction of a great independent council. This last suggestion came from Patkul, and was in agreement with the ideal of the Protestants of the period, which was to constitute a state within the State in all places where they were not in a majority.

These measures of toleration led Peter to wish to soften his people's manners and customs. He was always without any definite plan or method, but a certain longing for equilibrium guided that disordered spirit. Perhaps disorder is merely another form of order, the obscure laws of which escape us.

He abolished the humiliating custom of signing petitions to the sovereign with a diminutive name; he broke down the doors of the *térem*. Women were henceforth to live, as they were to dress, "in the German fashion." Marriage was surrounded with new safeguards: betrothed couples, before being united at the will of their respective families, were to have the right to see each other.

The influence of Natalia, of whom her brother was very fond, and who, following in the footsteps of their father, the Czar Alexis, spread in the court the taste for theatrical performances, is unmistakable here. As usual the reform was more theoretical than real. The ladies, who continued for a long time to wear the ancient costume, were enjoined to go into society, but there was no such thing as a salon. The Czar did not realize that it is impossible to decree a new system of

habits, which can only be the result of the patient work of generations. At the same time as he was crudely regulating these delicate questions, and in all good faith imagining that he was civilizing his nation, he was slashing with his terrible *doubina* the back of Neugebauer, the tutor to the Czarevitch, and dismissing him. The fellow had reproved Alexis for emptying the leavings on his plate into the dish that was being taken round to offer to the guests.

Meanwhile summer had arrived and Sheremetev advanced into Livonia. On July 18th, his thirty thousand soldiers defeated the eight thousand Swedes of Schlippenbach who retreated. Baron Huissen trimmed his pen and described the victory in his own style. The enemy had left five thousand five hundred and odd soldiers dead on the field; the Muscovites had lost barely four hundred men. Europe guffawed, which did not prevent the field-marshal from burning everything before him and seizing Volmar, and next Marienburg.

Part of the population of this last town was allowed to leave the place. Sheremetev picked out for himself among the crowd a big blonde girl, ugly enough but with a fine bust, and servant of a pastor called Gluck. This was a strapping wench who was a hearty drinker and had little fear of adventure. Hoping to put an end to her wild escapades, the minister of the reformed religion had lately married her to a Swedish trumpeter. But the husband had disappeared. Was he dead, or a prisoner? That was the last thing to bother her, and she settled down very comfortably to her new duties. She was passed from hand to hand, from bed to bed. The officers had forgotten her Livonian name and they called her *our Catherine.*

While Sheremetev was conquering Livonia and Charles, treading on Augustus' heels, was coming up to Cracow, Peter was carpentering at Archangel.

On August 5th, at the head of three hundred galleys, on which five battalions were embarked, the Czar dropped down by way of Lake Onega to Lake Ladoga on the south-east of Finland. There he met with Repnin and his troops on September 5; on the 22nd they both joined up with Apraxin, who was carrying on a savage campaign in Ingria, the most defenceless of the Swedish provinces; and on the 27th, having furthermore got the field-marshal with him, the Czar laid siege to Noteborg, where there was a garrison of four hundred and fifty men. The place surrendered at length in December.

Covered with glory, His Majesty punished the bad and rewarded the good. A whole company that had run away were hanged beneath the walls. Peter changed the name of the town, giving it a new one that revealed the one desire that swayed him: Schlüsselburg, the key of the sea. Menshikov was to be the governor.

" You have nothing to thank me for," said the man of duty to the favourite. " In raising you to this dignity I was not thinking of your good but of the State's."

Let others take his merits for their inspiration and pattern, they too shall have lands and titles! But they are not promised the diploma of a Count of the Holy Roman Empire, which Leopold presently despatched to Monsieur Alexander.

Naturally the episode was brought to an end with a triumph at Moscow. There was a great display of fireworks, and before everybody went off to get drunk at Préobrajensky the Swedish prisoners to the awe-inspiring number of a hundred and fifty were paraded through the streets. How many did Baron Huissen reckon them at? The better to sing of such exploits he began to read the Iliad again.

Miss Mons was not pleased. They were spoiling Menshikov over much. Sulky, a wheedler, a daughter of the horse-leech,

she asked the Czar for the fine estate of Dubino. "For the love of the Czarewitch," she entreated, rather incongruously. Peter refrained from answering her as he did Mary Cross in London: "there is service and service." But he was afraid that Anna might leave him, and while blaming himself for his prodigality, he let her have what she asked, in the beginning of 1703, before setting out for Voronezh where the engineer John Perry was waiting for him.

The Englishman was bitterly repenting that he had ever taken the Marquis of Caermarthen's advice. The digging of the famous canal that was to link up the Black Sea and the Caspian had been abandoned for lack of money, and no one remembered to pay him his salary. He had complained to Admiral Golovin, to Apraxin who was also Vice-Admiral or Rear-Admiral, to Monsieur Alexander, to Prince Romodanovsky; in short he had complained to everybody without obtaining anything more than good words. When he begged to have his passport returned, then everybody turned their backs on him. With the simple-mindedness of an honest man lost in the midst of a gang of rogues, he had let himself be caught again by Apraxin who had persuaded him that if he finished a certain difficult work to His Majesty's satisfaction, his pockets would never be big enough to contain all the gold that would be poured into them.

This was the construction at Voronezh of an extraordinary contrivance intended to raise and lower the water when desired, so as to bring out on dry land ships built of new unseasoned wood, which had fallen into such a state of decay that it would otherwise have been impossible to careen and refit them.

Peter, fond of every kind of curiosity, was in haste to go and see the beginnings of this wonder. The Company halted on

the way in Menshikov's estate, near Riazan, to found a fort under the auspices of Mussin-Pushkin, who held the office of Metropolitan of Kiev in the "council of high buffoonery." Each of the five bastions was named after one of the senses. *Seeing* was baptised with vodka, *Hearing* with lemonade, *Smelling* with Rhine wine, *Tasting* with beer, and *Touching* with mead.

Poor John Perry was in great danger, in this queer empire, of having to wait a long time for his money. Would he ever get it at all? The Czar listened with a preoccupied air to his lamentations. He was thinking of the Swedes; above everything he was thinking of the strip of coast he wanted to take from them. It may be guessed how full of impatience he was.

This year the campaign opened in the spring. It began with a very unpleasant business. The Saxon envoy drowned himself in the river. With his customary tact Peter searched the dead man's pockets. Could he have been suspicious of Augustus? He took from them various papers among which were several notes in a handwriting he recognized. He read them with a good deal of perturbation, and when he had read them one thing was clear. The dead man had been Anna Mons' lover. That whore must have had others! Now he suddenly saw why Anna had obstinately refused to be married. She did not love him, she never had loved him. He was bitterly hurt; most of all he was annoyed. Always extravagant and lacking in philosophy, instead of contenting himself with being ridiculous like everybody else, he must even be ridiculous in his own way. Orders went to the viceroy to throw the lady and her accomplices into prison. In what sense was the word *accomplices* to be interpreted here? Romodanovsky gave not a fig for such subtleties. He arrested thirty persons who mouldered for a few years in the dungeons of Préobrajensky.

To console himself Peter did not limit himself to choosing a single substitute for the fallen favourite. In Natalia's court and in Menshikov's household he recruited the elements of a regular harem. It included the two sisters and the two mistresses of his friend, Marie and Anna Menshikov, Daria and Barbara Arseniev, and also Anisia Kirillovna Tolstoy, with three or four girls among whom was " our Catherine " picked up by Sheremetev at Marienburg, and lately taken by Menshikov into his own service.

The little pleasure troop even followed the Czar and his favourite to the field, united when they were together, divided when they were apart. Golovin, infuriated to see what a great man on the whole his rival had become, made a sacrifice on his own behalf. He gave up to His Majesty his own pet Yagujinsky recommending that former bootblack to worm his way into the master's good graces and try to counteract the preponderant influence of Menshikov. The attempt was made far too late. It seemed that now there was nothing that could retard the dizzy ascent of the groom's son.

In April, after the taking of Nyenskanz, on the mouth of the Neva, the possession of which opened to the Muscovites the communication between Schlüsselburg and the sea, Peter and Alexander, who had distinguished themselves in the operations under the command of the Artillery-General Bruce, received on the same day the cross of the Knights of Saint Andrew. The signed recommendation of Field-Marshal Sheremetev was submitted with the utmost solemnity for the ratification of the " King," and Romodanovsky was graciously pleased to approve.

The jest was going rather too far, for Peter would be thirty-one in a few weeks' time, and he had just made his mark on the Baltic. Did he realize the importance of his conquest? The

childish glee that breaks out in his letters to his friends was not a whit more becoming to a sovereign of his years.

Dominated by his eternal fixed idea — to have a sea of his own and ships — he decided, on May 16th, to found a city among the islands of the Neva. Like that it will be altogether like Amsterdam.

Because he is set on holding his new possession, a citadel, to which will be given the names of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, shall be erected in the Island of Hares. A house shall be built for him in the Island of Berezovy. Let all who love him copy him and build others round about!

It is told how the Czar laid down upon the ground two strips of turf in the form of a cross, and with a musket-shot brought down an eagle flying over the site of the future city. Impossible that fine legends should not spring up on the shores of the estuary from which Oleg in the epic days set forth for Byzantium. Peter of course did none of these things. He never looked so far back in the past nor forward into the future. He never even looked behind his own back. Otherwise he might have seen spread out to infinity behind Saint Petersburg a barren desert filled with funereal forests, a desert that could give neither wheat, nor vegetables, nor fruits. What was that to him! He merely wished to come here and carpenter, for it was nearer Moscow than Archangel. He remained still the man of Zaandam. He insisted that his house should be exactly like the one he lived in there. It should be made of wood, but painted the same colour as tile. It should have pictures on the window shutters and the doors as in Holland. Because Peter was also a captain of bombardiers, a tiny mortar was set as an ornament on the roof ridge, and the four corners of the roof had each a flaming bomb, all carved in wood and painted.

He set up shipyards at Olonetz, and built in them a frigate

and five ships. He thought no more about Charles. He was once more completely in the grip of his hobby.

Directly he had got back to his capital he sent Vice-Admiral Cruys to Amsterdam to ask the States General to permit his subjects to enlist in their fleet, and also to engage ship's officers, sailors, naval artificers. He confided that he would soon have fourteen vessels to the envoy of Louis XIV, Baluze, whom his master had sent on a ridiculous mission: to borrow money from the Czar. In the same way he boasted to Augustus at their meeting in Birze, that he would presently have eighty formidable ships. He was a liar and slightly wrong in the head. The propaganda service of Baron Huissen, meant to celebrate his victories, was no longer sufficient for him. He founded the first Muscovite gazette.

Always on the move and full of ideas, he had the plans for the new fortress at Kronslot on the Baltic drawn up at Voronezh in October; it was built during the ensuing winter by the Governor, Menshikov. In November he betook himself to the rambling miscellaneous huts of St. Petersburg.

On the 3rd, he distinguished himself as a pilot to welcome the first ship flying the Dutch flag that cast anchor in the Neva. He bought the cargo of salt and wines at fancy prices, and made a present of 500 ducats to the captain. In the exuberance of his delight he forgot for this once to be stingy. He promised a bonus to the next two boats, and exempted those coming from the Mediterranean from half the amount of the customs dues. He was not influenced by any serious idea of realities. Archangel had river communications for the transport of goods to the interior far superior to those of Saint Petersburg. But he preferred his new harbour to the old one, and so everyone must follow suit. It was the policy of caprice.

On the 11th, he figured at Moscow in the classical triumph

with which the Campaign ended. Faithful to his childish tricks, he marched at the head of his company of bombardiers, while Sheremetev, Repnin and Bruce paraded in sumptuous state sledges.

That night he released the Swedish Ambassador Knipercron, and declared himself ready, now that he had conquered Ingria, to sign his peace with Charles, completely forgetting that a month before he had renewed his treaty of alliance with Augustus.

He considered his end attained because he now had a suitable sea for him to sail his ships on.

But though the Czar might be master of his empire, he was not master of his destiny. The war went on.

CHAPTER THREE

ALWAYS quick to change his mind when men or events constrained him to do so, Peter vigourously carried on his campaign in the summer of 1704 in Livonia, where he was certain to find only insignificant forces opposed to him.

The bulk of the enemy's troops were in Poland with Charles, who had just had Augustus dethroned by the Diet, and Stanislas Leczinsky put in his place, and was then wasting his time and bogging himself deep in political intrigues. The Elector of Saxony, continually soundly trounced, declared himself resolved still to keep up the struggle. Obviously his attempts to obtain peace had been in vain also.

The Czar, favoured by circumstances, went lightly from victory to victory. In July he captured Dorpat at the very moment when Sophia was dying, and in August he laid siege to Narva.

An old Scots soldier, Ogilvy, here guided his inexperience, but did not inspire his personal behaviour. He disgraced himself once more, disguising part of his troops in Swedish uniforms, and after the fortress was surrendered, striking in the most cowardly fashion the Governor Horn, whose one fault was to be a most dignified vanquished foe. The barbarian then presented himself in the town hall. He threw his sword down on the table with a theatrical gesture, and declared to the assembled notables that his new subjects would be as dear to him as the old. The blood dripping from the blade was just the blood of his own soldiers who had fled, an old habit of theirs, under the walls of the city. Immediately after this the Czar set out once more for Saint Petersburg to select a site for the Admiralty. Charles had come back from Silesia and taken up his winter quarters at Ravitz. In the surrounding villages the army, he wrote, was resting like lazy dogs.

Peter spent the following spring at Voronezh. Illness prevented him from joining the army at the outset of the campaign of 1705. He at length arrived at Polock on July 11th. At once his curiosity prompted him to visit the monastery of the Basilian fathers. Father Kosikovsky courteously received His Majesty, who smelt heavily of wine.

The unsteady sovereign paused in front of the statue of the Blessed Jehosaphat, represented with an axe sticking in his skull.

"Who brought this holy man into this sad condition?" he asked.

"It was the heretics, Sire," replied the Pole.

The savage fancied he was being insulted and drove his sword through the monk. The suite threw themselves on the others, cut down three and wounded two more fatally. The church was pillaged on the spot and the breasts of some pious women who protested against the bloodshed were cut off. That same evening Shaffirov wrote to the Czar's dictation (he kept his master's diary) that "five Uniates were killed for calling our generals heretics." The affair created some stir as far as Rome. Peter, to whom a lie more or less was nothing, struck out the phrase. In that way he would, of course, have committed no crime at all. He was wrong to be so modest, for this was fated to be the only feat of arms of the campaign.

Four days later, in fact, Sheremetev was given a complete beating by Loewenhaupt, one of Charles' best generals.

In January 1706, another defeat. Marshal Ogilvy and Menshikov, who were occupying Grodno, where they were squabbling like stable-boys, had to clear out of it in hot haste. They left their whole artillery and their baggage behind in the hands of the King of Sweden, who would have taken the whole army prisoner if the break-up of the ice in the Niemen

had not made it impossible for him to cross the river at that moment.

On September 24th, Augustus, who had been stripped of everything down to his very table silver, signed the humiliating peace of Altranstadt. None the less, with his usual perfidiousness, in October he lent his Saxon corps to Menshikov who with this help beat Mardefeldt at Kaliscz.

Peter was in the seventh heaven. He raised the favourite to the dignity of prince, and presented him with a magnificent cane adorned with a huge emerald and diamonds. And now he advanced. He flooded Poland with his troops and in July 1707 he slept in Warsaw.

The position was paradoxical. Charles had gone into Saxony, very wisely, to prevent Augustus from acting, but this very movement deprived the new king, whom he carried along with him, of the support of his troops. Thus the republic, after having had two kings, now had none at all. The Czar, disgusted with his traitorous ally, was about to try and invent a third one. He approached the Prince of Transylvania. The crown tempted Rakoczy, who nevertheless hesitated, as a client of Louis XIV, to rise up against Stanislas, another client of His Most Christian Majesty. Peter went deeper and deeper into intrigues. But what more could he do? His position was terribly difficult. His defeats weakened him, and his victories in no way advanced his affairs. They only enabled him to fire off cannon in Moscow and in Saint Petersburg, to organize triumphal processions and to ruin himself in fireworks. The solution lay elsewhere: he would not have won the war until he had overthrown Charles. Now if the King of Sweden had continually disdained him, he on his side had always prudently avoided the other; he would never dare to attack him, at any rate alone. He had realized that his conquests were

nothing but pawns which he must make all haste to bargain with. That was why for the last four years he had never ceased trying to obtain peace and at the same time, thoroughly practical and shrewd, to recruit allies for himself.

In 1705, he had sent Patkul to Berlin to ask for the support of the King of Prussia, for Frederick was at last in possession of the crown of his dreams. The Livonian had failed in his mission. This mere adventurer, disguised as a champion of the rights of his nation, no longer knew just what he wanted. He had not concealed from the Prussian ministers that Peter displeased and Augustus revolted him. He declared that he now wanted nothing but to be reconciled with the King of Sweden. At heart the only thing he thought about was marrying the richest widow in Dresden. Ignominiously given up to Charles by Augustus, without the Czar, equally base, lifting a finger to intervene, Patkul ended his extraordinary career on the wheel on October 10, 1707, after begging for the favour of being shut up for life in a castle in return for the promise to discover the secret of the philosopher's stone.

The Muscovite ambassadors were not more fortunate in their other negotiations. The Danes refused to renew the alliance, although they were offered Narva and Dorpat. Holland, France, and England turned their backs on Matveiev who begged them to act as mediators. His master's conditions were everywhere regarded as excessive. And yet Peter, reducing his claims still further, only wished to keep Saint Petersburg and the neighbouring coast. So much the worse, he became desperate, multiplying his approaches, and compromising himself at Versailles, at Vienna, even at Rome where Kurakin entreated the Pope not to recognize Stanislas. The Czar only wanted peace!

For financially he was in the last ditch. Ever since 1703, all

his budgets had been in arrears, and he only lived by shifts. In 1700, as we have seen, he had seized for himself the taxes paid to the legal owners of the markets. The next year, not sparing even his own friends, he had seized the contract for the mails that belonged to Vinius, and again in 1704, the licenses for the inns. He laid imposts on the baths, established octrois, set up monopolies in the sale of salt, of tobacco and even coffins. Having exhausted his invention, he set himself in 1704 to a root and branch reorganization of the departments of taxes, made a hash of it and got nothing effective done. In this year, 1707, he was preparing, in his perpetual imitation of others, to copy the Swedish administration of the conquered provinces. In 1703, he had not kept clear of the common blunder of reminting the currency. The operation brought him in fifteen per cent. But the profit was only illusory, since the Czar remained a tributary to foreign countries with a rouble the purchasing power of which continued to decline.

So now he was constrained, for it was always sheer necessity that impelled him, to apply himself to finding out at home the resources he would for the reason just stated have more and more difficulty in procuring abroad.

So far he had called upon the mining industry only for iron. Now he needed silver and lead as well. He gave orders for prospecting to be undertaken everywhere. England and Holland already were drawn upon now only for wool, not for cloth. He had it in mind to economize still further in this product. He started sheep-breeding in the Ukraine.

He had spread throughout the Empire the use of wine, which was very expensive. If he could grow grapes in the Astrakhan region! He accordingly asked one of his boon companions, the English merchant Henry Stiles, to write to London to have ten or a dozen men who understood the planting

of vines sent out to him. And no one would come. With his mania for addressing himself to the first comer when he had need of anything whatever, it had never entered his head that he would more easily get vine-growers in France, in Italy, in Spain, in Hungary, or in the lands along the Rhine, than in England.

At the same time as he was creating monopolies without mercy, he handed over to a private individual, named Demidov, the arms factory erected a few months before at the cost of the State. We must not imagine that he was torn between two opposing economic doctrines! Demidov had simply offered to turn out for one rouble eighty kopecks the same muskets that the foreigners made the Czar pay twelve to fifteen roubles for. Peter thought the offer a profitable one and accepted it on the spot without reflection. And this was the birth of the great Russian metal industry.

He never had either plan or method. He never foresaw anything, but he knew how to adapt himself to circumstances.

He had waited until the very eve of the war to make an army. But as long as the fighting continued he would go on improving it. Soon, thanks to Ogilvy, he would have good cavalry, and, thanks to Bruce, an artillery that would do more than make a noise. The wounded became numerous. In 1706, he founded the first military hospital in Moscow. He summoned surgeons from Paris. Their travelling expenses were huge; he opened a school of surgery.

More and more he wanted soldiers. Where was he to get them from? He used to walk swiftly, with long strides; so it irritated him excessively to see the boyars, even when on horseback, move slowly followed by a long train of serfs on foot, their *holopy*. Enough! Orders went out for the *holopy* to enter the army.

He abolished the barbarous custom of doing away with deformed children or children born out of wedlock. He was praised for his humanity. One day at Vishny, in Volotshok, he disclosed his real motive. In the crowd he noticed a pretty girl and said to her laughingly, " I'll get you a husband." Her companions guffawed. A German officer had given her a baby and deserted her. Peter frowned and declared that the child would make a good soldier for all that.

Among the reforms of this period there were two that did not spring directly or indirectly from the war or his financial worries. And they were obviously not due to Peter.

The asylum for the poor, created in 1706, was inspired by the Patriarch of Novgorod; the civil alphabet, which is the old alphabet simplified, adopted in 1707, was submitted to the Czar by the printers from Amsterdam who came in that year to Moscow.

The apparent universality of his mind was only that of a universal meddler and busybody. With the same zeal he approved a useful measure or devoted his energies to some casual nonsense. In a letter to Apraxin communicating to the general his instructions with regard to the campaign of 1706, he set forth at great length a method, infallible according to him, of training learned dogs. He was then thirty-four years of age.

Directly he had escaped from the tutelage of actual events and given himself up to his own free devices, the reformer, so impatient, as it seemed, to put his nation on a European level, displayed an unexampled poverty of intellect. Seven years after his return from his travels he had not yet finished with the business of beards and costumes. He was thrashing stubborn officials with his own royal hands; he was arming with scissors the soldiers posted at the church doors.

The result of this fury of zeal was inevitable. In 1715, Peter

had rebellion on his hands. The Bashkirs and the tribes of the Don rose in revolt. The insurrection, which he subdued in the long run, lasted for three years. A more sagacious sovereign would have spared himself these superfluous cares in the middle of a difficult war. The adventure brought the first title of Russian count to Field-Marshal Sheremetev, who during this home campaign was publicly under the surveillance of a sergeant of the guards. The revolutionary here inaugurated the system of commissaries in armies.

Peter never understood the profound inner meaning of the movement, which was entirely and naturally due to his hasty measures that outraged the traditions and feelings of the masses. But he saw that Mokvitin, one of the leaders of the revolt, was the son and the nephew of three of the *Streltsy* executed in 1699. The seed of Miloslavsky had sprouted once more! Once more he would suppress those dreadful regiments he had recently revived, and executions would begin again on the Red Square. He fought the past to avenge his own past.

One night he jumps on his horse, and followed by a considerable number of attendants, strikes off into the country. A snow-storm surprises them on their way; they lose themselves, and go hammering at the doors of the isbas. No one will answer the knocking, supposing them to be brigands. At dawn the Czar at last reaches Suzdal. He has been told that Eudoxia was being visited by pilgrims of some sort, and he is set upon ascertaining the truth. Terrible, with eyes of madness, he goes forward into the silent monastery. Suddenly in a corridor his foot knocks against sleeping folk lying there waiting for the next day's audience. Let a dozen of them be seized at random and impaled in front of the window of the traitress, even as in the old days gibbets had been set up in the court of Sophia's

convent! The ex-Czarina, when she wakes up, will discover unmistakably who has been here.

Time never smooths away Peter's vindictive hates. There are still languishing in prison some of the accomplices of Anna Mons, who herself by some miracle managed to get out and marry the Prussian envoy Keyserling. The latter had the extraordinary idea of asking His Majesty for a place for the former favourite's brother!

" Let me never hear of her or hers again," orders the Czar.

" Your wife is a whore," says the gallant Menshikov improving the occasion. " I have slept with her. Everybody has slept with her. Leave us alone about her."

And then the two friends battered with *doubina,* with fist, and with foot, the unhappy ambassador of Frederick, who tumbled to the foot of the stair and had to hasten to excuse himself for his stupidity.

Peter was faithful to his hates, as to his friendships, because above everything he was faithful to his past.

When Feodor Golovin died in August 1706, who was chosen by the man of duty to take his place? Men of capacity? Two nobodies. Apraxin, a good fellow but a stupid fool, was made Grand Admiral. Golofkin, the famous Gabriel who was so popular at Zaandam, a very low individual and completely worthless, became Foreign Minister. Two old *poteshny.*

The baptized Jew Shaffirov, received the title of Vice-Chancellor. He, too, had shared in the famous travels of Peter.

And what gave Menshikov his omnipotence? He could neither read nor write; he was utterly ignorant and an abominable thief. But he quickly assimilated notions of every kind; he was good for anything; he copied his master. Nothing more was necessary to make the Czar esteem him highly.

Peter's mind was singularly limited. It tended only to imitate

others, to imitate itself, to wish to be imitated. That is why the man could never rise beyond the tastes and propensities of the child and the adolescent; he continued them.

Romodanovsky still occupied his grotesque throne. The Czar still called him " Your Majesty," humbly excused himself for not having saluted him in the street, and thanked him in all seriousness for appointing him a colonel.

He still kept the account book he had started at Voronezh. " Earned 366 roubles for my work in the shipyard and 40 roubles for my captain's pay. Colonel's pay received at Grodno: 460 roubles. Given to a monastery: 150 roubles.

This year at Vilna he consented to act as godfather, with the Queen of Poland as godmother, to a young negro his ambassador at Constantinople had given him. Was it not because there had been a negro in his childhood, John, the slave of old Matveiev, who had gallantly gone out and recovered his master's body from the Red Square, at the time of the first revolt of the *Streltsy,* that the Czar took so much interest in this godson? Nine years later, he sent him to study in Paris. There he fell madly in love with one of the Regent's mistresses, and all but died of hunger through the system of Law. Most fortunately he did not die: he became the great-grandfather of Pushkin.

How Peter was dominated by his past! One person he missed beyond all, the one being he had adored: his mother. In her lovely white bosom his dreadful sufferings had always so swiftly died away. There was a girl in his harem now who, whenever an attack came upon him, went fearlessly to the sick man, and succeeded in easing him merely by talking to him in a firm, caressing voice. Then she would gently pass her thick fingers through the curling hair before pressing the poor bewildered head down against her abundant breast. Peter, who liked to give nicknames, called his other women the

aunts, and this one the *mother.* She was the servant girl from Marienburg who had been enjoyed by Sheremeter and his officers, and whom Menshikov had taken later to himself. She had left the favourite's household in the preceding August, when Alexander had married Daria Arseniev. The two friends had then divided their common troop of women. In this way Catherine and Mlle Tolstoy came to the Sovereign.

The favourite was squat and strong, with a big turned-up nose and over large eyes. Though naturally blonde, she had dyed her hair black to throw up her sunburnt skin. Lively, jovial rather than vulgar, she drank heartily, danced agreeably, knew how to help in the kitchen, and ironed linen better than anybody in the world. Peter appreciated her various qualities as much as her healing powers. By Catherine he had daughters of whom he was devotedly fond, and who consoled him for having a legitimate son who was such a pious booby. But he did not live with her or the children.

His ruling passion was still the sea. Directly the war allowed him a little respite, he always hastened to return to his " paradise on the Neva." That was what he called Saint Petersburg. His cottage there had taken the place of the little house of Préobrajensky, for he always repeated himself. It contained four rooms, a vestibule, a study, a bedroom and a dining-room. All the doors, slavishly copied from his Dutch model, were too low for his six feet eight and a half inches, and he was always seen to duck his head as he went in.

As a rule he rose at five. For half an hour he would walk up and down in a dirty short Chinese dressing-gown that displayed his bare legs, and wearing a cotton night-cap fluttering with green ribbons. Then he would call for his secretary Makarov, Shaffirov's successor, and listen to him reading his reports while he finished dressing. He wore uniform only while with the

army. His ordinary costume was made up of a pair of breeches, a very thick woollen coat and a taffeta waistcoat. His woollen stockings were coarsely darned, and he wore heavy shoes with a common steel buckle. Sometimes he wore a dusty three-cornered hat, sometimes a cap of black or red velvet. In winter he wore a sheepskin bonnet pulled down on to his ears.

His study, whither he betook himself to sign his documents, was equipped with a writing table and an armchair he had made himself of birch upholstered with leather. A map of Europe was pinned on the wall. In a corner could be observed the turning lathe at which he worked every day, for the pastimes of the man were the same as those of the child. On the ground lay scattered his carpenter's tools.

After breakfast he goes out. A boat lies moored in front of the cottage on the bank of the Neva. He takes his place in this and often steering it alone he betakes himself to the *Four Frigates* inn. And there, as he smokes his pipe, he receives his ministers and the foreign envoys who have installed themselves among the sailors belonging to the harbour. He can be heard making long, loud speeches. He enters into talk with everybody. If he sees a ship's captain, he invites him to clink a glass and carries him off unceremoniously to dine with him or with Menshikov. His morning rounds end in the Admiralty. There he empties a glass of vodka and crunches a cracknel; then he busies himself with his fleet in company with Apraxin, who is always armed with his compass, which irritates Cruys, who being himself full of good sense considers the Grand Admiral to be the last word in donkeys.

In the afternoon Peter goes to the yards. At night he gets vilely drunk in the midst of the " council of high buffoonery." When there is a flood he enjoys himself immensely, wading in the water mid-leg deep, watching people taking refuge, like

flies, on the roofs and in the trees. He laughs until he has a pain. "It might be Noah's flood!" he cries.

Peter loved that city of the mud. He found a dark charm in the estuary of the Neva that enchanted him. It was certainly there that he wished to bring to reality the most ardent of his boyish dreams, the starting point of which was the Ismailov skiff, to have a harbour and a navy. The Baltic was to be his very own sea.

Because he always clung to his memories, and Azov was his first conquest, he would undoubtedly have preferred to establish himself in the south. But on that side his pretentions clashed against the sober obstinacy of Turkey. His Ambassador at Constantinople, Peter Tolstoy, Miloslavsky's cousin, the deserter of the Troïtsa, who, though endowed with the highest qualities, had had so much trouble to win his master's confidence, had not since 1701 been able to obtain rights of free navigation for the Russians to Constantinople. The Sultan had answered that he would sooner open the doors of his harem to the Grand Duke than the Black Sea.

Thus it was partly by choice and partly by constraint that Peter clung to this coast whither chance had led him. He was not following out the vast designs of Ivan the Terrible, the greatest of all the Czars, who wished, and in this was copied by his successors, to have "a window on Europe." He was only looking for a shipyard on the sea coast where he could build his beloved boats with his own hands.

The Czar had begun the war against Sweden under the pretext of avenging the pretended insults endured by Sergeant Mihaïlov; he refused to give up Saint Petersburg to satisfy the tastes of the carpenter of Zaandam.

Would he be able to keep his port or would he not?

The affair would not be settled in Ingria, nor in Karelia nor

in Livonia. Peter's fate was at that moment being decided in Saxony, and without that Northern barbarian having to give an opinion about it. The diplomatists cared very little to know who was to be the owner of a few wretched marshes on the banks of the Neva. They were passionately eager to discover Charles' secret thoughts and intentions in another direction. Would he or would he not intervene in the war of the Spanish Succession? The whole of Europe had its eyes fixed on the silent captain who was lingering at Altranstadt.

Beaten at Ramillies, Louis XIV approached him through Benseval. The enigmatic young man listened to the ambassador and said never a word.

The victorious coalition sent Marlborough to him, who arrived covered with ribbons and lace, and his pockets stuffed with gold. The Englishman did not see a map of Muscovy spread out on the prince's table. But he had so clearly divined, under the speeches of Chancellor Piper, the real intentions of His Majesty, that he had already made up his mind to devote to his own personal use the sums Queen Anne had remitted to him for other purposes.

The Foreign Minister at Moscow at last consented to realize that France, being interested in drawing the King of Sweden to her camp, was the only country capable of making any effort to obtain peace for the Czar. Golofkin made haste to compose, in incredible Latin, a letter which he conveyed to Benseval — a delicate attention — by the hand of one Morel, a Frenchman serving in the Muscovite army.

Peter, just a little too cunning, stated that he would not make known his conditions until negotiations were actually opened. But Morel declared that Menshikov, very eager to enjoy his great wealth at ease, was urging his master to make an

end. If Petersburg was left to him His Majesty would give way on every point.

Charles shrugged his shoulders. He insisted on the complete restoration of the Swedish provinces. Besides he had no time to dilly-dally over such nonsense. He had signed a treaty of perpetual peace with Prussia, and was quarrelling furiously with the Emperor over one wretched question of the protection of Protestants.

Versailles began to hope. Would he march on Vienna? He set his foot in the stirrup. But the mere gesture was too much for his adversary, who gave way.

In the autumn of 1707, Charles abandoned Augustus to his three hundred and sixty-five natural children, and went up towards Poland again, followed by the docile Stanislas.

The coalition had won, France had failed. The Czar evacuated the territories of the Republic.

Menshikov nervously begged His Majesty to send him his instructions. But Peter, who was amusing himself in Moscow, did not even open the favourite's letters. At last he woke up and made his will. " If by God's will anything should happen to me, send the 3000 roubles in Menshikov's house to Catherine Vassilevska and her daughter."

In January 1708, the Czar set out for the army. So little was he certain of retaining his conquests that he gave orders to lay Ingria and Livonia waste. Thus the enemy would advance through a desert. The one time he was foreseeing he was still wrong. How could he suspect the intentions of the Swedish king? Charles' own generals did not know them. Only one person knew them: the old traitor Mazeppa.

CHAPTER FOUR

IT WAS in March 1708, at Radoshkovitse, not far from Grodno where he had established his camp, that Charles met the hetman's envoys. It seemed to him that there was nothing left to do but to arrange questions of detail. For a long time, indeed, through the influence of Princess Dolska, an old friend, and the Jesuit Zalenski, both of them Poles greatly devoted to Stanislas, Mazeppa had promised his support to the King of Sweden.

But in the meantime something had happened. The hot-blooded old man had seduced the daughter of one of his Cossack chiefs, and the father in revenge had informed the Czar of the whole plot that was brewing. Mazeppa managed to exculpate himself yet once more, and the denouncer was executed. All the same he was forced to act with more circumspection.

Peter's blunder was to imagine that he could secure Mazeppa to himself by means of benefits. Had he not made him the second Chevalier, next to Golovin, of the Cross of Saint Andrew? Now the hetman's position compelled him to be constantly betraying somebody; a circumstance to which his unstable character readily reconciled itself. If the power of Moscow had the right to overturn his power, he held it no less from the independent-minded Cossacks who were bitterly offended by the reforms of the sovereign of Muscovy, and who were reluctant to fight on far-off battle fields. It was impossible to conciliate interests so contrary and remain loyal at the same time. That was why he could be found turn and turn about accepting subsidies from Menshikov and paying subsidies to him.

Nothing then more understandable than the definite volte-face that was in preparation. That clever man, however, had

no mind to risk everything against little. Charles, whose savage rectitude was annoyed by the perpetual tergiversations of his ally, thought Mazeppa's claims still exorbitant: he was offering to cede white Russia and the Ukraine to Poland, a number of fortresses to Sweden, but was demanding for himself Courland with Polock and Vitebsk, with the status of a fief. The negotiations dragged along, time was passing. They came to terms in the end. The king was in too great haste to put into execution a plan of the grandest conception in the world. He would take the enemy from the rear, with Moscow as his object, while Lybecker, at that moment in Finland, would invade Ingria, and Leczinsky's bands would stop the Polish gap. To reinforce his armies he summoned Loewenhaupt's ten thousand men quartered in Livonia, and leaving Mazeppa to fortify himself secretly at Baturin and to accumulate provisions there, he marched directly on Borizov and crossed the Berezina.

Menshikov, brush in hand, was intently engaged in colouring the design for the new livery for his servants, in company with the more serious Sheremetev, when Charles appeared, on July 3, 1708, in front of Holovitshin. They had to stop him by building parapets, then they withdrew. The King presently took Mohivev and installed himself there, to wait for Loewenhaupt, who was slow, and finally he went off without him.

The Swedish general moved slowly. Still he did cross the Dnieper; but on October 9th, he was beaten at Liesna. Drunk with pride Peter proclaimed that the enemy had eight thousand five hundred men killed, and lost seven hundred prisoners. Now the corps contained some ten thousand soldiers, and the beaten general brought six thousand seven hundred in to Charles. Much more serious for the King of Sweden was

Lybecker's defeat in Ingria. His daring plan was falling to pieces.

Mazeppa made haste to steal away. But his suite forced him to rise against the Czar, that infamous destroyer of sacred traditions. He tried to raise the Cossacks. Only two thousand horsemen followed him. He now gave up the thought of defending Baturin, which was quickly captured by Menshikov. And thus was Charles deprived of munitions and provisions at a stroke.

The terrible winter decimated the ranks of the famished Sweden. At the beginning of 1709, the invader had only twenty thousand disheartened sickly troops left. For a moment he lowered his hard iron head and dared to admit that he did not know where he was going. He raised it again on January 6th, and flung himself at Wespjik, a modest stronghold which he abandoned presently, having sacrificed a thousand men to no good purpose.

Mazeppa realized that the great captain was at the end of his tether. He turned towards the Czar again. Let them restore his title of hetman, which had been taken from him, and he would place the King of Sweden in their hands. Peter, who always shrank from confronting the conqueror of Narva, consented, and then tired of being cheated and fooled, broke off the parleyings. A courier from that incorrigible traitor had been taken on the road bearing fresh proposals to Stanislas.

Charles, who was destitute of everything, could do nothing now but throw himself into Poltava in the hope of finding food for his men. The town resisted, the besiegers lost heart, and the prince's advisers begged him to raise the siege.

" If God sent me one of his angels to give me the same advice I would not listen to it," replied the stubborn man who continued to believe in his star.

Meanwhile Peter, timid at first and only gradually becoming bolder, had come up with considerable forces. In June the two armies were divided only by the river Vorskla.

On the 17th, the King left his tent early to avoid the compliments preparing for him because it was his birthday. In the course of his ride a shot pierced his left foot. The wound festered, and the gangrene rose to the knee. On the 22nd, a remedy was administered and he was out of danger, but unable to move.

The Muscovites among whom a rumour of his death had circulated, crossed the Vorskla. The camps were now all but touching. Both sides could hear each other's drums. Even so Peter did not make up his mind to give battle.

In exasperation the King of Sweden at midnight on the 26th ordered his troops to advance to the attack. The Czar on his side made use once more of a trick. He clothed one of his best regiments in the coarse stuff he equipped his recruits with, to deceive an enemy lost beforehand in any case.

Field-Marshal Rehnskjöld, to whom Charles, who was carried in a litter to all the most exposed positions, had handed over the command, drove in these disguised troops and cut them to pieces, while the Cossacks, who had dashed forward with frightful yells fell back in retreat.

At last the sun rose, and the huge Muscovite army appeared in broad daylight, Sheremetev in the centre, Rocune on the right wing, Menshikov on the left wing, with Bruce directing the artillery. The Swedes had already not a single cannon-ball left. Was it the certainty of victory that gave them the courage to conquer? All, from Prince Michael Galitzin, one of the old *poteshny,* in command of a regiment of the guards, to Devier, the little Portuguese Jew bought in the port of Amsterdam, today a General of the camp, displayed the greatest valour.

Peter on his mare Lisette, a gift from the Shah of Persia,

galloped across the battlefield. A musket-ball went through his hat, another buried itself in his saddle.

There was one person lacking on this great day, and the father would not forget it. The weakling Alexis, the commissary for victualling. The Czarewitch had caught a cold, God knows how!

At nine o'clock the fighting became furious, and half an hour later two-thirds of the Swedish army took to flight, headed by Loewenhaupt and Charles, whom they had hoisted on to the back of the old charger he had inherited from his father.

Field-Marshal Rehnskjöld, Chancellor Piper, senators, four generals, ninety-six officers, two hundred and one officers of lower rank, and two thousand five hundred and twenty-eight soldiers surrendered to the conquerors, who only laid their hands on four guns. The last ones that had remained to the enemy!

The chief dignitaries and officers among the prisoners were graciously invited to the banquet the Czar gave to his own generals. Peter did not appear until everybody had risen from the table. He took a cup and holding it as high as his eyes, he pronounced in a loud voice, in an impressive silence, and without adding a single word:

"I drink to the health of His Majesty the King of Sweden, master in the art of war."

Behind this pretended modesty — or was it modesty indeed? — was concealed the immeasurable pride of the race. It broke out in all of them. Their hearts swelled to bursting. Blinded by their infernal vanity they refused to see that they had vanquished but the phantom of the hero, and that the troops that were in flight had now for months been only the shadow of the incomparable Swedish army. It was winter, hunger, sickness, lack of munitions, the treacheries of Mazeppa, and his own rash overweening confidence that had in the first instance worsted

Charles. They had only given the finishing stroke. They had only slain a corpse.

Alas! they were not the only ones to be mistaken. Europe, instead of reflecting on the incalculable consequences of the unheard of event known as Poltava, was about to commit the dangerous blunder of attributing the unforeseen end of the arbiter of Altranstadt to the power of Peter without observing that this new thunderbolt knew nothing at all of war.

The Czar desired nothing except peace. To secure it he ought to have laid hold of the King of Sweden, and plied the riding switches instead of wineglasses. The cavalry should have cut off the fugitives and their chief; then all would have been over.

Four and twenty hours went by before this simple idea came into the heads of Peter and his generals, all dazed with their own triumph. Then it was too late. Loewenhaupt, who *did* know his business, was already far away. When Menshikov came up with him at Perevolotshna, on the banks of the Dnieper, the Swede turned round, and if his exhausted soldiers had not refused to fight, he would have laid by the heels in the twinkling of an eye that newly-made Field-Marshal who in his sheer audacity had nothing at his back but a few squadrons and the vold.

Charles had time at least to cross the river on two boats lashed together with ropes, which carried his carriage and the treasure of the army. Mazeppa got over in another with two kegs of gold. The vanquished King with his stiff leg made towards Turkey, accompanied, besides his officers, by Poniatovsky, a clever brilliant Pole, who had been at the battle as an onlooker, and whose son was one day to be King, and also Neugebauer, the sometime tutor to the Czarewitch. The blows of the Czar's *doubina* because he had reproved Alexis for throw-

ing his bones back into the dish had made him decide to offer his services to the enemy.

While the train was pressing on, Loewenhaupt signed his capitulation. The twelve thousand prisoners were sent to labour on the future capital.

" Thank God," wrote the sovereign to Apraxin, " there is the foundation stone of Saint Petersburg well and duly laid. I think we shall remain masters of it as well as the territory around."

Was he not sure of it then? All the same they continued to build the city just as it had been begun: at random and without a plan. It was his particular method to have none, and he kept to it.

Where did Peter go after Poltava? First of all to Kiev to find Catherine, who henceforth never left his side and was treated almost as consort, and to pay homage to the Lord. In spite of all his avarice he showed himself generous to the God of Hosts. The mass lasted for seven hours, and the sermon was magnificent. Prokopovitch, who delivered it, was a new acquaintance. His Majesty had just met him at the monastery of Ksov, and the monk pleased him at once. He was a well of knowledge. He had studied in Poland among the Jesuits in his youth, spent some years in Rome and at various academies in Italy. He must go to Saint Petersburg. He should be the abbot of the newly built Alexander-Newsky monastery. He must organize schools for Peter. They would talk of that later. For the moment duty constrained the Czar to depart without delay.

From what quarter did the victor of Poltava propose to hurl disorder into a broken enemy? In Livonia or in Finland? He boarded a ship and went through Poland. The nobles of the country hailed him as the defender of their national independence. Poor people! But on his side what was in his mind? He was dreaming of reforming the constitution of the Republic

before he had ever had leisure to grant one to his own subjects. He was planning to send books and schoolmasters to the Serbians and the Montenegrins while he had so few at home. And while he was still uncertain whether he would be able to keep Saint Petersburg, there he was playing about the question of Mecklenburg. He imagined himself the master of the world.

Things were to go indubitably wrong at Thorn where Augustus awaited him, for the traitor thoroughly deserved a severe castigation. The Czar threw himself into his arms. The other, very adroit in fooling other people, had two treaties of alliance in his pockets, one with Denmark and one with Prussia. The simpleton agreed to join in with them, quite proud to be in the game. And yet he ought to have known what could be got from the beaten heroes of Dresden and Copenhagen. But in war as in life, he never liked to be alone.

Well satisfied, he went on his way, dreaming his dreams, to Marienwerder to meet Frederick.

The meeting passed in feasting and emptying many bottles of Hungarian wine. The two sovereigns gave one another innumerable marks of effection. They could hardly say half a dozen words to each other without a cordial embrace. The negotiations, which were in Shaffirov's hands, came to nothing. The Vice-Chancellor went beyond all bounds. Piling Muscovite arrogance on top of his Jewish conceit, he showed himself so difficult that the Prussia ministers declared it was impossible to conclude anything.

The Czar, to show there was no ill feeling, presented his friend with the sword he had worn at Poltava. It was heavy and long, copying the sword of Charles. Frederick, who was not a tall man, wore it out of politeness and almost tripped over it every step he took. He was genuinely relieved to see

the Muscovite depart: at last he could be rid of that brute of a thing.

In November Peter resolved to end where he ought to have begun. He besieged Riga in person. Astonished that the place did not capitulate as soon as he had tossed three bombs into it, he set off quickly for Saint Petersburg.

There he remained for a fortnight, long enough to give orders for the erection of a Church to Saint Samson, in commemoration of his victory, and to lay down a new ship, the Poltava, in the yards.

His head full of plans, he thought of nothing but the organizing of his approaching triumph. This campaign having been more glorious still than any of its predecessors, he must do better than had ever been done before.

On December 21, 1709, the astounded people of Moscow saw coming behind the Swedish prisoners, who were ashamed to figure in such a masquerade, first a sledge drawn by reindeer in which stood Wimeni, a Frenchman whom His Majesty had gleefully anointed the Czar of the Esquimaux, then nineteen more also drawn by reindeer and filled with genuine Esquimaux in fur hoods.

Boyars and merchants came out of every house and offered wine to this Czar and his train all abominably drunk, and surrounded by children flinging wreaths and green branches on them.

The procession passed under seven triumphal arches bedaubed with paintings in crude colours. On one of them the Sovereign was represented in the costume of Hercules in the act of taming Sweden in the guise of Juno. The others were decorated with pompons, allegories or obscene caricatures holding up the enemy to derision.

In the middle of the *long Czarina* was erected a huge wooden

palace in which the whole court was assembled at the feet of Romodanovsky perched on a throne of prodigious height and dressed in the costume of the ancient Czars.

The "King" graciously allowed Field-Marshal Sheremetev to speak first. He came forward and said:

"By the grace of God and the good fortune of Your Caesarian Majesty, I have annihilated the Swedish army."

Menshikov saluted and pronounced in his turn:

"By the grace of God and the good fortune of Your Caesarian Majesty, I captured at Perevolotchna General Loewenhaupt and his army."

And last of the three Peter declared:

"By the grace of God and the good fortune of Your Caesarian Majesty, I fought victoriously with my regiment at Poltava."

The prisoners, bewildered and distressed with the Chancellor Piper at their head, were ordered to bow respectfully before the Caesarian Majesty.

Suddenly in the street there broke out a low clamour, horrible, full of fear. The crowd fell back, broke up. The old men hid their faces and murmured, making the sign of the cross: "It is Antichrist! It is Antichrist!"

The Czar, on horseback again, had suddenly gone clean mad. He swept along at full gallop, cleaving the ranks. His face wore a monstrous expression; his whole body was shaken with convulsive twitchings. Peter had drawn his sword. He dashed like a wild beast upon a soldier who held a Swedish flag and with a blow beat the trophy down into the mud. His hands fell down again, the grimacing mouth breathed out a kind of hoarse rattle, and the horse stopped while the sovereign continued to shake his head, his feet, his shoulders.

"It is Antichrist," repeated the old folk. "That is why the

bells did not ring. That is why the icons were not brought in procession. That is why the troops were not sprinkled with holy water."

A very tall man of the lower orders went through the press and was the only person who dared go near Peter. He looked steadily in his eyes, and spoke to him very harshly, and the other gradually began to calm down.

As the day was fading the procession was able to go forward again. The pale children began once more to cast wreaths and green boughs upon the back covered with green cloth and crossed by the great ribbon of Saint Andrew, and tottering and swaying above the saddle.

The Czar was still drunk, but the fit was already passed. The one who had been seen to master publicly the victor of Poltava then went back to his stoves. His name was Felten and he was the head of His Majesty's kitchens.

CHAPTER FIVE

IN VAIN did the pious Muscovites invoke the divine wrath upon the Antichrist. During the year 1710, the Czar won victory upon victory. In June he captured Viborg, and the wretched little Baltic fleet which he commanded himself, having been made a rear-admiral after Poltava, took part in the operation. With that supreme logic which ruled all things in this country, his gallant conduct on the steppes of the Ukraine won him another step in the navy. But whatever titles they might bedeck him with, Peter never cast off the old man of perfidy. After solemnly undertaking to grant the Swedish garrison the honours of war, he promptly treated them as prisoners. At Riga, which Sheremetev reduced to surrender in July, he broke his word in the same fashion.

" The Czar is not accustomed to keep his agreements or his promises longer than he finds they suit his convenience," remarked Charles, who had taken refuge at Bender among the Turks, where he busied himself learning Hebrew, and in other ways.

The practical-minded sovereign laughed at the unfavourable judgment of the conquered. He was at Pernov, at Arensburg, at Dunamund, at Reval. He conquered Karelia, Livonia, Esthonia. He was about to get control of Courland. The reigning Grand Duke asked for and obtained the hand of the Czarevna Anne, one of the daughters of the late Czar Ivan, in other words of the Italian surgeon. The prince died suddenly soon after the wedding, which was celebrated at the end of October in Moscow, and the open succession excited the insatiable cupidity of Menshikov who was not satisfied with the possession of Ingria, raised to the status of a hereditary fief, the counties of Dubrovna, of Gorky, of Potchep, the estates of

Oranienburg and Baturin. In any case, here we find the Czar already in a position to wield the policy involved in marriage alliances, which had been forbidden to his predecessors, whose suggestions for marriages were rejected by even the smallest ruling princes.

Peter then had excellent reasons to be highly satisfied with himself in the autumn of 1710. He had reason also to be much less satisfied with his allies and his diplomats.

The Danes, who had just taken up the war again, had been beaten, and to all appearance, finally and decisively. Augustus was no help to him. Russia had not followed up the conversations begun with so much arrogance by Shaffirov. Kurakin had signed a stupid treaty of alliance with the Elector of Hanover, George-Louis, the youth whose insolent smile had long ago wounded the Czar so deeply on his visit to Sophia Charlotte. The Muscovite had pledged himself only to intervene in Germany if the Swedes were the aggressors in attacking one of his allies in that country.

England at that moment was doing her utmost to reconcile the cabinets of Stockholm and Copenhagen, without the Czar being in any position to influence London, where his ambassador Matveiev had eighteen months earlier got himself imprisoned for debt. He had been promptly released, but the incident had given rise to an interminable exchange of notes, and the post was still vacant. Poland in her turn declared herself unable to endure the continued presence of the Muscovite troops in her territory. She demanded their removal and claimed to have Livonia and a part of the Ukraine restored to her. And lastly, at Constantinople the situation was becoming dangerously exacerbated.

Peter Tolstoy, after obtaining from the Sultan the dismissal of Charles from Turkish territory, was losing ground every

day. He had no more arguments to use, as he had emptied his pockets already. The King of Sweden, on the contrary, had considerable sums of money at his disposal. He had saved his war chest; he had inherited Mazeppa's kegs of gold on the death of the hetman, who had, it was suspected, taken poison; he had borrowed from Holstein; he had got a loan from an English company. Poniatovsky and Neugebauer, who looked after his interests at Constantinople were therefore in a much better position to convince the Viziers than their opponent. At the end of 1710, Tolstoy risked everything to win everything. He launched an ultimatum. The Sultan promptly declared war on the Czar and shut his ambassador up in the Seven-Towers.

Peter now had two enemies on his hands. This was the first outcome from his long series of blunders. He had to begin with committing an irreparable mistake in allowing Charles XII to escape at Poltava. Next he was wrong, instead of applying himself strictly to concluding peace with Sweden, to have ventured into a tangle of complicated intrigues, which called for a nice political sense, a diplomatic talent, and financial resources, in all of which he was equally lacking. He recognized the gravity of his position but without discovering the causes for it.

Before he joined the army he hastened, with a feverish kind of hurry that betrayed vague perturbations, to settle his personal affairs and those of the State.

He sent for the widows of Feodor and Ivan to come to the Palace, the Czarevna Natalia, and two of his half-sisters, and introducing Catherine to them he announced that this lady was his true and lawful wife although he had not had time to carry out the customary ceremony, which would take place as soon as possible. He therefore insisted, in case anything

should happen to him in the ensuing campaign, that they should accord his widow the rank, the privileges and the revenues assigned to dowager sovereigns.

The former maidservant of Pastor Gluck, who had been the mistress of Sheremetev, of Menshikov, and of others besides, and who for the last eighteen months had been treated as sovereign, was to receive the provisional title of Highness. She was able to soothe Peter's fits; she was kind, gentle, and devoted; he could not be without her any longer. For all these reasons he had decided to keep her, and as prejudices meant nothing whatever to him, since he was Czar she should be Czarina.

This new war would no doubt keep him away from Moscow for a long time. To whom should he delegate his powers during his absence? He always took his ministers along with him; the favourites would be occupied in the various fields of operations, which were becoming more numerous; Romodanovsky, the "King" was merely an invention of his sick mind intended to satisfy his need for submission; the old deliberative Duma had died of itself, and had been partly replaced since 1708 by the Council of Ministers, whose authority was very circumscribed. As he did before his departure for Europe, the Czar entrusted the government to a few persons in whom he had implicit confidence. But this group was given a new name. At Poltava he had taken Swedish senators prisoner and had questioned them; in Poland he had interested himself in the constitution of the Republic even to the point of wishing to reform it. And so the perpetual imitator, copying both enemy and ally, founded the Senate. Among the eight members that composed this assembly, there were Tiphon Streshniev, Mussin-Pushkin and Michael Golofkin, Gabriel's brother. This creation, hurriedly conceived as it was, was destined to endure. In

the beginning, like all Peter's other reforms, it only answered to a pressing necessity.

His Majesty then left his capital in a post-chaise, accompanied by his wife, to join the army he was collecting against the Turks. He went to Smolensk and then on to Luck where a scorbutic fever forced him to take to his bed. But he had already settled on his plan of campaign.

Apraxin should defend Azov without the help of the fleet, which was detained at Voronezh owing to the insufficient depth of water, and which in any case, except for three or four ships, was in a state of complete decay. Sheremetev should move to the frontier of Moldavia in order to prevent the enemy from entering Poland and the Ukraine. The Czar had secured a new ally in the shape of the Hospodar of Moldavia, who dreamed of shaking off the Turkish yoke and of proclaiming himself independent. This subtle-witted Cantemir, well-educated and ill-balanced, the author of various works, among which was a *History of the Creation of the World* in Latin, hoped to join also with Brancovan, the Hospodar of Wallachia, who was, he believed, inspired with similar ambitions.

Hardly completely cured, but seized with his itch for movement, Peter set off for Saint Petersburg. He remained there for some days and began to lose his head. Apraxin was begging him to send him his orders. He replied to the Admiral-General that he had nothing to say to him. " I am sick and despairing," he wrote piteously. And he set out once more on his travels.

In the beginning of May he had a conference with Augustus at Jaworow, naturally with no results, and found a little consolation with Madame Sieniawska, the wife of the Grand General of the Crown.

The Czar took great delight in the society of this Polish lady, who was rather plain but exceedingly clever and witty.

They had been acquainted for three years, and he had never asked her for more than her friendship. Which was not what His Majesty usually asked from the ladies he condescended to take notice of. This idyll was the only one of the kind in his life. They discussed politics together and were seldom in agreement. At the moment when Charles was advancing upon the Ukraine he confided to her that he was ready to burn all his provinces as far as Moscow. " Once upon a time," said Madame Sieniawska mockingly, " there was a gentleman who to be revenged upon his wife made himself a eunuch."

He smiled, amused. She had subjugated him. He was Hercules before Omphale. He did not spin wool at her feet. But he gallantly built her a boat. And while he wielded saw and hammer in his shirt-sleeves, she chattered lightly away sitting on the grass beside him.

A pest of a fellow, M. Baluze, surprised them one morning like this and disturbed them, to his own stupefaction. This envoy of Louis XIV was obstinately trying to bring the Czar and the King of Sweden together. Versailles, pursuing the same object, to make use of its allies, was in this trying to rid Charles of Peter, just as yesterday it had been urging the Sultan to fight the Muscovite.

Imitating his subtle lady friend, the Sovereign showed some cleverness. He accepted the mediation of the King of France on condition that it was exercised not at Stockholm but at Constantinople. And the ambassador withdrew, dashed and crestfallen. Madame Sieniawska seemed pensive. In opposition to her husband and the Czar she was on the side of Leczinski.

The moment of departure arrived. On May 10, Peter gaily invited her to come and wage war against the Turks.

She would not be the only woman to follow the army. Like His Majesty, the majority of the superior officers were accom-

panied by their wives, some even by their children as well. It was so difficult to get news of one's family when on campaign! Every night, forming a circle around Catherine, the most approved of the ladies feasted and danced.

The generals who had been exchanged since Poltava, the Wewdes, the Buturlins, the Allarts, were far from regretting the prisons of Sweden. They would soon have to sing another tune.

The noble Cantemir received Sheremetev at Jassy as a brother Slav. But once the embracings were at an end, when the Field-Marshal spoke of revictualling, the other sent him to Brancovan. The Hospodar of Moldavia was straightforward. The Hospodar of Wallachia, not so simple, played with everybody. Decidedly he would not mix himself up with anything. And he went back to his own country resolved to remain faithful to the Turks.

While the foreign soldiers wished to know if they were to march on Bender, which was at no great distance, to seize Charles at last, a flurried council was held. There were only provisions for a week left. They would send in hot haste to buy cattle in Hungary, sheep and flour in the Ukraine. But the Khan of the Tartars, who had not been taken into account in Peter's genial plan, had already severed the communications of the Muscovites with the North. Cantemir providentially remembered that the Ottomans had established magazines at Braïla. The Czar divided his army into two parts, and gave Roenne orders to seize those stores. The General would subsequently join him on the Pruth. His Majesty's army set itself leisurely in movement along the course of the river.

On July 18th, at night, his camp was completely invested. The Vizier, his janissaries and his spahis held one bank, the Tar-

tars the other, and the enemy artillery was posted on all the heights.

Peter's first thought was to escape with his wife in disguise. The enterprise seemed very dangerous, and as soon as it was fully explained to him he crumpled up. He became the wretched man of Narva all over again. He shut himself up in his tent and declined to take any part in the deliberations. The generals assembled, with Catherine present, and could see only one means of avoiding a disastrous surrender: to try to obtain an immediate peace.

At first the Vizier rejected the proposal, and then consented to open negotiations. Shaffirov conducted them on behalf of the Czar. He begged the Sovereign, who had been easily convinced by his wife, to indicate his conditions. They were ridiculous. Peter's stupidity at that moment was greater even than his cowardice. He offered to surrender Azov and its coast, to restore Livonia, and even the other provinces with the exception of Ingria, to Sweden, to establish Leczinski on the throne again, to pay the Sultan an indemnity. Was that enough? He doubted it. He added Ingria, all but Saint Petersburg. But he offered Pskov and various cities of the interior if his enemy insisted on it.

To tempt the Vizier, all the money the Muscovites had in their possession was quickly got together. The practical Catherine had the presence of mind to think of saving her jewels, in case Shaffirov should be unsuccessful. She distributed them among a number of officers and bade them hide them away.

The Jew, even though baptized, retained the best quality of his race. He was an incomparable broker. After seven hours of bargaining, he brought back, in spite of Poniatovsky's efforts to insist on the surrender of Cantemir, an unhoped for peace. The Czar simply gave up Azov and its territories, undertook

to refrain from meddling further in the affairs of Poland, and authorized the free return of the King of Sweden to his own States. The negotiation had been carried through with a masterly hand.

Charles' wrath broke out in fury when he arrived at the Turkish camp just in time to see the tail of the Muscovite army moving quietly off with arms and baggage, protected by the troops of the Sultan still anxious lest the Tartars might fall upon the vanquished. The fighting man begged for the loan of a few squadrons. He promised to bring back the Czar to the Grand Seignior a prisoner.

" God commands us to pardon an enemy who humbles himself before us and asks for mercy," nobly declared the Vizier, in a hurry to get home and put away the ducats he had harvested from the affair.

Peter, trailing behind him the good Cantemir, who to console himself for his disappointments would write a history of Turkish music, had already recovered himself in his usual fashion. His life was safe; he was reassured; he had nothing to think about but to discover how he should violate the treaty. Perfidious and ungrateful, he cared nothing whatever for what might then happen to the two distinguished hostages left in the enemy's hands, the son of gallant Sheremetev, and his saviour, the astute Shaffirov.

He condescended to appear modest at Warsaw where he betook himself after his pitiful exit from Moldavia. When he was congratulated on having got out of his evil plight so well, he replied:

" My luck consists in only getting fifty lashes instead of a hundred."

Satisfied with this epigram he went to Dresden.

Here he arrived at one o'clock in the morning. A suite

had been reserved for him at the *Gold Ring* Hotel. But he desired first of all to visit the museum. He was conducted through it all night long by the light of torches. Next day he had recovered his good humour. He mounted the wooden hobbyhorses at the fair. "Quicker! quicker!" he shouted, choking with laughter when the members of his suite lost their saddles and fell on the ground.

Hail-fellow-well-met in his manners, he became friendly with the inn servants, took his meals at their table, and on the day of his departure fought with them when they prevented him from packing away in his baggage the handsome curtains the Elector had sent to furnish his bedroom. He wanted to present them to Catherine, whom he had left behind at Thorn, along with the very magnificent watch he had bought at Dresden. His Majesty was most anxious lest his wife should not know how to fall in with the usages of courts.

Preparations were, in fact, being made for an important event. As soon as Peter finished taking the waters at Carlsbad, he was to marry his son to the Princess Charlotte of Wolfenbüttel whose sister had married the new Emperor, Charles VI. The ceremony was to take place on October 14th, at Torgau, which belonged to the Queen of Poland. This match delighted the Czar. It flattered him. And above all he hoped that it would exemplify in the case of Alexis the old Muscovite proverb, "Marry and change."

He was more and more vexed that the Czarewitch, who was weakly, bigoted, hostile to movement and novelties, shared neither his tastes, nor his ideas, nor his hobbies. This young man of twenty-one seemed guilty in his eyes. The wretched youth was merely the victim of that absurd father.

The reformer's son, by some extraordinary anomaly, had been originally brought up, in the old traditional way, in his

mother's *térem,* in the midst of women, priests, and monks. Eudoxia taught him nothing, till he was nine years old, except what she had learned herself, to fear God and respect Him. When Peter savagely drove away his innocent wife on his return from Europe, he took hardly any notice of the boy. He was entrusted to tutors chosen by chance. His aunt Natalia set to work, without succeeding, to make him hate his mother. He was forbidden to see the exiled woman, even to write to her. And at the same time he was dragged along, at ten years of age, to the *Salle Lefort.* The Czar, more fitted to destroy than to build, snatched Alexis away from a system of education that was obviously little calculated to develop the mind of a prince, but provided no other for him. The weakness of his reform disclosed itself here. It was the work of a revolutionary who remakes to his own desire a world that he dislikes, and not the work of a sovereign labouring for the future. Otherwise would Peter have taken no interest in the fate of his future successor? In the intervals between his perpetual comings and goings he dinned into the ears of his heir the words *duty* and *service,* but without trying to discover the best means that would allow the brain of a little savage to assimilate these ideas completely strange to it. The Czar never had any time to spare. And besides his was a visual mind that saw only the outside of things.

The boy's soul, abandoned in this way, was incapable of turning by itself alone towards that which had not yet been born; it swayed rather towards what was not yet dead, and clung desperately, needing a definite support, to its very earliest education the one sole foundation of which had been religion.

On the day of his first communion the Czarewitch knelt before his confessor and swore to accept him as the judge of all his actions and as Christ's representative on earth. The humbled Church made this representative of Christ the representative

of the dissatisfied. And thus the timid Alexis was condemned, through his father's poverty of intelligence to be the unwitting head of the opposition.

Peter never guessed it. The sly boy, adroitly advised and hating him in his heart, never showed anything but a meek and gentle face. But the Czar suddenly took his heir away with him to the second siege of Narva.

The pious lad instinctively loathed battles as he loathed any kind of turmoil and agitation. Why should men not live snugly each in his own home reading goodly works on theology, not forgetting to caress girls and get drunk, for his hereditary religion found nothing incongruous in the wedding together, in most indecent fashion, of the purest devoutness and the worst debauchery. He saw nothing but the horrible side to a battle. And besides, how could he be enthusiastic for a war that appeared incomprehensible to him, and which furthermore was the melting pot of detestable reform.

If Peter could not divine the interior drama of a soul, the ill-disguised repugnance the Czarewitch displayed for fighting did not escape him. It vexed him, hurt him, made him indignant.

When that cold-in-the-head Alexis had the audacity not to be present at the great victory of Poltava, his exasperation could no longer contain itself. And he made up his mind to act. In October 1709, during his visit to Frederick, he wrote to Alexis from Marienwerder:

" Son, we give you notice that on the arrival of Prince Menshikov you are to come to Dresden with the persons whom he shall assign to accompany you. I bid you live there honourably and apply yourself seriously to your studies, especially to those foreign languages you have begun, German and French. Work also at *giometry* and *fortofication,* and at politics in their time

and place. When you have finished with *giometry* and *fortofication* you are to write to me. And so may God keep you on your journey."

Menshikov added to the programme. The heir to the throne must also learn to fence and to dance in the French fashion. And he must keep his accounts.

Alexis obeyed, delighted to think that a few hundred good German leagues lay between him and his terrible father. But the moment he was installed at Dresden, he found himself simply lost; he had no orthodox priest with him! He begged his confessor Ignatiev to send him one. "Let him come to me most secretly," recommended the Czarewitch, "he must lay aside all the marks of his calling, shave off his beard, his moustache, cut his hair, he must put on a peruke and wear German clothes. He will pass for one of my servants. He need bring no ornament, nor missal; I have all the holy books. For mercy's sake, take pity on my soul; do not leave me to die unforgiven. For that I should have to do, if I were to come in danger of death. Let him have no scruples about shaving off his beard; better commit a small sin than leave a soul to perish."

Snugly stowed away in his room in Dresden, Alexis paid no heed to mathematics and the art of war, to fencing or dancing. Round bulging forehead, a dull and obstinate eye, a jug of wine standing beside the glass he drains with big gulps, he reads the *Ecclesiastical Annals* of Baronius lying open on his knee. In all seriousness he marks with a cross in lead pencil the passages that delight his secret hate.

"In France men wore long coats. Charlemagne prohibited short coats. Praise for the long coats the opposite of the short."

Chilperic King of France died because he had despoiled the churches.

"My father will die likewise since he has committed the same crime," stammers the bigot with his lips dripping wine. "Ignatiev told me so: 'God pardons you for desiring his end, for he is heavy upon the people.'"

The young hypocrite, bending his back, shuts up his book and hides it away, then picks up a pen. "Gracious lady, little mother, Madame, I have learned that my lord has recognized Your Grace as his wife . . ." He is congratulating Catherine on her marriage.

Meanwhile Baron Huissen was busy arranging his own. The poor creature struggled against it in terror. Marry a foreigner — was it permitted? He begged His Majesty to allow him to see other princesses. What good would that be, this one was perfection! He said no more, bowed, plunged again into Baronius and that night girls were brought to his bed.

Peter, leaving Mme Sieniawska for a moment, had signed the contract at Jaworoev.

And then arrived the dreadful man the Turks did not, alas! capture on the Pruth. All the same, thought Alexis gleefully, they have lost Azov. God was punishing Antichrist already. And the son grinned, then composed his face to modesty.

The door bangs back; the colossus enters, twitching his legs, wriggling his shoulders, attacking him with grimaces.

"Well, what about the *fortofication* and *giometry?*"

The other replied in smug tones, joining his hands in the posture of prayer, that he had made extraordinary progress in those most useful branches of science.

"I shall ascertain that for myself later," said the Czar.

A dark October sky lay like smoke upon the lofty roofs of the castle of Torgau.

"What a gloomy countryside!" cried Peter in an amiable

mood, addressing the Queen of Poland round whom were all the Wolfenbüttels.

Augustus was detained with the army and had been unable to come. The King must not trouble to excuse himself. The man of duty knows well what it is to serve.

But why had they closed all the shutters and put up so many red velvet hangings?

By the light of the torches the Pope celebrated the ceremony. He spoke in Latin when addressing the bride, who was long and flat with a pitted face and soft timid eyes. Over her head, according to custom, Golofkin held a heavy gold crown. The Czarewitch, his head sunk down into his cravat, prayed to God with all his soul. May the Master of Heaven forgive him for wedding a heretic against his orthodox will.

In vain were innumerable flasks of Tokay drunk during the three days' feast. A vague air of boredom hung over the gathering.

" I shall take you to our Moscow churches," murmured the Czarewitch to Charlotte who was just sixteen. " When you see them you will want to come and pray in them with me."

One person, at least, was quite intoxicated with joy, and had written Latin acrostics and French rhymes in honour of the newly married pair. For thirteen years now, boiling with impatience, he had waited to meet His Majesty the Czar, and in those thirteen years not a day had passed without his turning in dream towards Muscovy, where the arts and sciences had now, it appeared, begun to flourish. He had forseen all Peter's victories. Thus at the beginning of this year he had not doubted for a moment that the illustrious monarch would speedily cut the Ottomans to pieces and rid Europe of them. His enthusiasm increased as his wrath rose against the unworthy city of Leipzig, which he forbade to claim the honour of his birth. Let his good

friend Huissen not loose a moment in presenting him to His Majesty.

"Monsieur Leibnitz," said the Baron.

"Sire," declared the author of the *Theodicée,* "we have the same starting point, you and I. Both of us Slavs, belonging to that race the destinies of which no man can yet foretell, and both of us pioneers and initiators of the ages to come. . . ."

Peter listened politely to this eccentric who advised him to have magnetic observations taken in his States. Their talk was a little obscure, but the stranger proposed to set down the conversation in writing. His Majesty would put the plan before Bruce. The Grand Master of the artillery did not content himself with knowing how to fire cannon; to this knowledge he joined other talents. The Czar regarded him as one of the foremost scientists of the age. He was the author of a calendar the mere publication of which in itself alone would suffice to cover with glory any less universal genius. Often in the night, when residing in his capital, Peter as he left some orgy would raise his eyes to behold the highest window in Bruce's house with a number of telescopes levelled at the sky. A light was always burning in the observatory, for the Scotsman never forgot, before going down to his bed, to renew the candles. This chattering German plagued His discriminating Majesty, for it did not escape him that this time he had to do with a kind of charlatan and beggar combined.

Leibnitz, infatuated with the idea of a diplomatic career, begged to be appointed the Czar's representative at the Court of Hanover.

The Czar, eager to be rid of him, promised to consider the idea when he got back to Moscow. And the other went away enchanted. It had seemed to him that the Sovereign was disposed to encourage scientific research in his empire.

Peter's one pressing wish at the moment was to get away from these gloomy merrymakings and to rejoin his wife at Thorn, whence they would proceed together to Riga.

They arrived there on Saint Andrew's day. On the occasion a magnificent fireworks display was given. On the blue background of the night there appeared in letters of fire this noble phrase: "Long live the Liberator of Livonia."

It was he who had ordered this set piece himself. He was inaugurating a policy that was to endure for a long time. The Russians, in the excess of their simple arrogance, always regarded themselves as delivering the peoples they were enslaving.

CHAPTER SIX

ON MARCH 2, 1712, at seven in the morning, in a little Moscow Chapel belonging to Prince Menshikov, there was celebrated the old marriage of His Majesty. That was the phrase of the two persons entrusted with the issuing of the invitations, Kikin, one of the heads of the Admiralty, and Lieutenant-General Yagujinsky, Golovin's old favourite, then Peter's, but replaced in this last position some months before by a handsome lieutenant of the Guards, Rumiantzov.

Officers of the fleet filled the most prominent parts in this ceremony, at which there figured no minister and no representative of the nobility. The Czar had wished to be married in his quality of rear-admiral. For best men he had chosen Admiral Cruys and another comrade from the navy. The Dowager Czarina Prascovia, Ivan's widow, and Madame Cruys served as sponsers to Catherine. The two daughters of the Sovereigns acted as bridesmaids.

That same day there was a great reception at the Palace, followed by a state dinner, a ball, and a display of fireworks. The Marienburg soldiers' doxy had made her official entrance into history.

One courageous voice was raised on March 12th in the Cathedral of the Assumption, the voice of Stephen Yavorsky, who in the circumstances took the place of the Patriarch. In an incendiary sermon he ventured to fulminate publicly against husbands who abandoned their wives and against the more scandalous reforms. This was a crime of high treason. The bold prelate offered the Sovereign to retire into a monastery. Peter, who needed him for support in opposing the dangerous agitation of the *raskolniky,* declined the offer. He contented himself with gradually diminishing the authority of the interim head of the church, strengthening the powers of Mussin-Pushkin,

creating a Council of Bishops, and bringing ecclesiastical affairs under the jurisdiction of the Senate. Yavorsky henceforward could not appoint a single pope without the sanction of that assembly.

Every time the Czar came back to the question of religious reform, which was to be the most important of his reign, he was actuated solely by personal motives. In his heart he would really have liked to settle it at one stroke. But when he took the matter in hand, he became timid and always put off the final solution.

At that moment, furthermore, the war and all its consequences at home and abroad absorbed him too much to allow him to apply himself to finding that solution.

Fighting was now going on in Mecklenburg where at the end of 1712, the Saxons and the Danes were defeated by Stenbock's army.

In the spring of 1713, Peter, who had not managed to draw the new King of Prussia, Frederick William, into the coalition, and who was being fooled by the Elector George Louis of Hanover, decided to attack Finland, "the foster-mother of Sweden." He easily took possession of Abo. Apraxin and Michael Galitzin won a real victory at Tammerfors. The conquest of the country was completed in 1714.

On July 27th, the Czar had one of the greatest joys of his life. At the head of seven ships, four frigates and two hundred galleys, he forced the Swedish Admiral Erenskjold to surrender his sword to him. He embraced him, telling him he was proud to have had such a foe to fight with. A triumph similar to that for Poltava was at once organized. From the summit of his lofty throne old Romodanovsky greeted Peter with the words:

"I salute you, Vice-Admiral."

For months past His Majesty had coveted this rank, which the "king" had steadily and sharply refused to give him.

The victory at sea had given the Aland islands to the Muscovites. But the situation in Germany was becoming complicated. If Menshikov had actually forced Stenbock to surrender, the allies had squabbled so much afterwards that they could not agree which of them should hold Stettin. Prussia in the most obliging fashion kindly entered the city in their name. And in 1715, having already secured her guarantees without giving a single soldier, she consented to join the alliance. Denmark was angry. George-Louis, who had become King of England, endeavoured in a muddled kind of way to settle matters. But someone now reappeared that everyone had lost sight of. Charles had escaped from Turkey, after refusing, sword in hand in his blazing house, to leave it when the Sultan invited him courteously to do so. The hero, who was turning into an adventurer, had shut himself up in Stralsund. On December 12th, Frederick-William took the place without troubling about the Muscovites. The King of Sweden had got away before the surrender and gone to the island of Rugen. The Czar, doubly vexed, felt as though this terrible war was never going to end.

Now more and more he longed for peace, for these last four years of fresh struggles had still further aggravated the extreme disorder of his treasury. The period of handy expedients had come to an end. Now everything was in a complete mess.

By some extraordinary chance he had a Finance Minister who was an able man and a fairly honest man as well, Kurbatov. But instead of giving him a free hand, he kept obstinately thwarting him. He threw himself in the most headstrong, crackbrained, hasty, ignorant fashion into a series of incoherent

measures that started by destroying what he had previously taken pains to build up.

The revenues were centralized in the town halls. He decided to transfer the offices of taxation to the capitals of the provincial governments set up in 1708 in imitation of Sweden. By this means he tried to avoid having too large a part of the receipts used for local purposes, when it was indispensable that the army should be the first consideration. That was tantamount to remodelling the whole governmental machine from top to bottom. The moment was ill chosen. Kurbatov begged him not to commit this blunder. He spurned the advice and issued the order. But he soon was obliged to admit he could not carry out the transfer of the aforesaid offices from one administration to another. It was Kurbatov, by some strange irony, who was to have to carry out the operations in the place of the defeated author of the reform.

Peter, who copied everything with the slavishness of a child, intended each government to maintain a certain number of army units. But this Swedish system was part of a general organization of taxation different from his, and the only result was chaos.

Meticulously concerned with details, and suddenly bent on decentralization, he laid it down that each class of receipts should be assigned to one definite kind of expenditure. Thus, for example, the product of the tax on marriage certificates was to serve for the care of sick soldiers. But he never hesitated, if necessity impelled him to mix everything up together. He filled the Admiralty chest with the revenues originally assigned for the commune of Saint Petersburg; later on he emptied it to provide the arrears of pay for the officers.

He demanded that each of his ministers should draw up an exact budget. But he was the last person to respect them.

He wished to borrow abroad, and asked the States-General for a loan. But at the very same moment he was burning Dutch ships at Helsingfors. The Hague protested. He replied guilelessly that as the enemy ships were too far from his own his sailors fired on the boats that were within range. Naturally enough after this handsome exploit he did not receive a florin, and an indemnity was demanded from him. He claimed that it should be paid by the Swedes, and threw the Chancellor Piper into prison, an old man of seventy who died there the following year.

He had an excellent idea: to create entails. Bruce gave up astronomy and artillery for the time being, and plunged into the study of French, English and Venetian legislation on the subject of inheritance. Peter ended by drawing inspiration more simply from the Muscovite custom. This reform went outside the merely fiscal. As he was strictly preoccupied merely with finding money, he made a failure of it.

He realized that in order to have a basis for taxation it was necessary to develop general prosperity and foster private enterprises. Accordingly he declared himself opposed to monopolies. Always hard at work and always beyond everything else completely devoid of plan and method, he did not hesitate to increase their number. Again in return for some tens of thousands of crowns, he granted excessive privileges to the ports of Danzig, Hamburg and Lübeck.

Without knowing either the word or the thing, he passed with amazing ease from mercantilism to systematic mercantilism. A believer in the theory of the balance of trade, he founded new cloth factories, a paper factory, a glassworks, and he hunted for gold in Siberia. But he declared the foreign corn trade to be free.

Attached to a decentralizing doctrine which he had adopted

by chance and for purely fiscal reasons, he opposed the creation of a College of Mines, hastily changed his mind, and established it. But he made no objection to the establishment of a College of Commerce which was to make many useful interventions, and which sent sons of merchants to study business abroad.

Peter's activities were exercised without rhyme or reason. But he kept stirring himself and compelled others to move too. He transmitted to a mass of men, that before his coming had been inert, a movement that often looked like mere haphazard heaving. Yet anything was better than the previous deep torpor!

While the Czar was at his wits' end for money, his favourites were gaily and extravagantly growing rich. A scandal broke out in 1714. The Senate, which had been growing in authority, was in that year charged with the investigation of a most serious affair of peculation against the State. The culprits were very distinguished persons. Their names were: Prince Menshikov, Grand-Admiral Apraxin, the Chancellor Golofkin, the Grand Master of Artillery Bruce, Kikin the head of the Admiralty. Other high officials, two senators, and even the Director of the Mint, whose tongue was destined to have a red-hot iron thrust through it, were similarly compromised.

They came before their judges, their arms filled with dossiers, setting forth confused and jumbled accounts. Was it to defend themselves? It might have been doubted, so much zeal did they throw into accusing themselves, forestalling everyone else, with the most astounding callousness.

Menshikov cast up to his accusers that they knew nothing. They had omitted to mention the silver bars he had got from Kurbatov, commissions he had drawn from the towns of Lübeck, Danzig and Hamburg, and the twenty

Маскарадъ въ Москвѣ въ 1722 году.
Съ всесьма рѣдкой гравюры того времени (Изъ собранія Д. А. Ровинскаго).

Engraving of the royal procession, Moscow, 1722

House inhabited by Peter the Great at Saardam, Holland, in 1697

thousand crowns he had pouched on the sly after the battle of Poltava.

"I can't remember lots of things!" he exclaimed lightly, when he had got to the end of his enumeration, out of breath.

He had stolen so much, and everywhere, that he recognized that he could not state the amount exactly. He had thought he was merely making use of the authority committed to him. Why had he not been told if he had been wrong in behaving as he did? He could not understand this sudden fuss at all. Everybody had done just what he had. He had done like everybody else. He was perfectly sincere. His fellow culprits were equally sincere and said substantially the same thing.

"All the thieves shall be hanged from the biggest to the least," bellowed the Czar brandishing his *doubina.*

"Does Your Majesty wish to have no subjects left then?" asked Yagujinski wickedly.

He would have lost at any rate the greater part of his coadjutors.

There were exceptions: a Sheremetev courageous and honest, a Romodanovsky, who was a savage but straight, a Michael Galitzin proud and scrupulous, the incorruptible James Dolgoruky, and very few more. But the rest! An incredible batch of sons of stable-boys and smugglers, of bootblacks and shop-boys, idiots good for nothing and scum up to anything, rogues and charlatans. The Muscovites had superimposed Oriental slimness upon their native dishonesty, and the foreigners had imitated them the other way round. The finest gang of adventurers known to history! All the same they were ardent, active, and above all docile. Peter simply could not do without them.

The inquiry languished and no one was punished except a few nobodies.

The tolerant Czar, who was both perfidious and untruthful

himself, observed no treaties, never hesitated to break his word. But the man of duty stood up boldly, who earned his honest living by plying the carpenter's trade or carrying out the duties of vice-admiral and general, for during a sea voyage he had recently been promoted to the latter rank. Now he insisted that his example must be followed in everything. Because he had no beard the Muscovites had to shave off theirs. Because he preferred foreign dress they were forced to adopt it in their turn. Because he liked to build boats, they had had to fight for the last twelve years. He did not steal, so they must not steal either.

Judges were strictly forbidden to take bribes, and merchants to put stones in the bales of hemp they sent to England. And there at once he had imprinted, almost without suspecting it himself, a moral character on his reform.

He was an untiring worker, often toiling away for ten or twelve hours a day. He would by no means countenance his subjects' abandoning themselves to their natural oriental laziness.

Here he was fighting a national vice. He attacked it at the point where it inconvenienced him at the moment. The Senate, which was entrusted with making all final decisions, went to sleep over his plans. At once came orders to create within the assembly a permanent committee to despatch business promptly.

He had studied, very badly of course, but he did not share that opinion, many sciences and several arts. He decreed compulsory public education. Let there be no illusion. It would in reality be compulsory only for sons of *djaks* and popes, and besides — it never really functioned, through defects in the system, except in the upper strata of the population. Was he simply intent on filling by this means his naval academy directed by Ferguson along with a new-comer, the Englishman

Bradley, and his artillery and engineering schools? Obviously, since he was a sailor, an artilleryman and a devotee of *fortification,* they would learn just as he himself learned, that is to say, in the most disorderly possible fashion.

The Department of Education passed from the hands of Prokopovitch, the monk he met after Poltava, who was colossally learned and who had a library of thirty thousand volumes, to those of Pastor Gluck in whose house the Czarina had once done the family washing.

The good man, all bewildered and out of his depth, was given the task of teaching, to pupils who did not know so much as their alphabet, geography, ethics, politics, Latin rhetoric, the Cartesian philosophy, Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, Chaldeon, French, English, and horsemanship. Poor Gluck imagined he could get through by making the scholars sing the psalms of Luther. This was too much for Peter, who dismissed him, but put no one in his place.

It appeared to him to be a more urgent matter to disseminate foreign books. One of the first that was translated at his command was a work of Puffendorf which described the Muscovites as savages. He had no doubt that after this pleasant reading lesson his subjects, immediately convinced of their own stupidity, would hasten to adopt European ways.

Some time before he had founded a theatre, which was directed by his sister Natalia. To begin with, there had been given in it the *Life of Saint Alexis,* mystery plays, farces, and even Molière's *Don Juan.* Now nothing was ever staged there except the glorious exploits of Peter.

In short, animated by the sincere desire to raise the moral and intellectual level of his people, the Czar found nothing better to do than to give them himself as a pattern and a model. To this ridiculous consummation he was condemned less by the

vanity of an ill-civilized barbarian than by the very shape and cast of his mind. The man held sway over the sovereign. Because the individual picked up and pouched away all kinds of scraps of knowledge and ideas without assimilating them, the monarch, when he desired to transmit them to others, neglected to adapt them to their proper setting. He did not set up any new system; he forced everybody to regulate themselves according to his caprices. To become civilized was accordingly to become like him.

It must be realized that, alongside this, Peter, who had for some years had frequent contacts with several European courts, tended to acquire a higher conception of his own rôle. He sent orders to the monasteries to collect their annals so as to enable a history of Russia to be composed later. He forbade private persons to send petitions to him direct. He contemplated having four codes drawn up. He founded the Order of Saint Catherine with the obvious intention of justifying his strange marriage by exaggerating the extent of his wife's intervention at the time of the disaster on the Pruth.

Alas! at the same time as he seemed to wish to behave no longer like a carpenter with a crown but like a real sovereign, he signed a ukase forbidding shoemakers to put in the soles of men's and women's shoes nails that spoiled his floors, and he occupied himself personally with the administration of the kitchens in his new palace. He was constantly prowling round the saucepans and being constantly scolded like a scullion by Felton his chef. He measured with callipers the missing part of the cheese, and stormed at night if the piece was not brought to him intact. Felten having complained that his wages were too low, His Majesty turned the intimate dinners at court into picnics. Each guest paid his share, and a percentage of the total was assigned to the starving cook.

In spite of meritorious though desultory efforts, Peter always remained uncouth and a clown. His dual personality broke out in a series of contradictory measures in which he sometimes yielded to humane ideas, sometimes to the mere instincts of the savage.

He founded homes for illegitimate children, and he tattooed his recruits like galley slaves. He proclaimed that it was necessary to bring about a general softening of manners, and administered blows of his *doubina* to all and sundry. He insisted that the fine manners of Europe should be accepted as a pattern, and wrote obscene letters to Catherine. He maintained that merit must be rewarded first of all, and he made Zotov a count in 1710. Grand Admiral Apraxin, whose incapacity he took seriously for ability, and his best diplomat Peter Tolstoy, who at last came back from Turkey after a long stay in the Seven Towers, were only to receive the same title a dozen years later.

In a touching letter he complains that no one helps him. What human brain of any balance could accommodate itself to the working methods of that eccentric who has no leisure to give to the framing of a code of civil laws, but who finds time to elaborate and complete the huge mass of regulations for the drunken "council of high buffoonery."

Zotov's house was now known as the *Vaticanum*. Four stuttering attendants brought in the elect clad in the red cardinal's robe, into the hall of the consistory furnished with nothing but casks, in which there stood the throne of the Prince-Pope which was a pile of barrels with a decoration of bottles and glasses. The opening of the conclave was the occasion for a public procession. Peter went first, dressed as a Dutch sailor and beating the drum. Zotov rode astride a hogshead drawn by four oxen, surrounded by mimic monks, and followed by carts drawn by

pigs, goats, elks, and bears. The cells of the members of the conclave were casks sawn in two, one half being reserved for food and drink, the other for the natural products of digestion! The professor of civilization was a regular attendant at these vile gatherings, giving himself up to drunkenness and every debauchery. To give variety to their pleasures, a Princess Abbess was introduced into the council.

Peter had no shame. He was without either sense of his own dignity or even respect for the dead.

He had a comic funeral carried out for one of his favourite dwarfs. The brother of the deceased, a dwarf himself, throughout the burial ceremony clasped in his arms the coffin covered with black velvet and borne on a sledge harnessed to six little black horses. Twenty-four little dwarf men and as many females, arranged according to their height like organ pipes, preceded by four priests in splendid robes, and thirty choristers, formed the first part of the procession. The presence of the Czar, accompanied by all the ministers, and by the officers of his household, gave this funeral caprice a sort of official character.

In 1714, Peter decided to marry Zotov, who was eighty-four years of age, to a lady of rank, Anna Pashkov, who was sixty. During four months the whole court was preparing for this carnival wedding under the distinguished presidency of the Chancellor, Golofkin. His Majesty wrote the necessary directions for the ceremony with his own hand, and twice reviewed all the maskers. He had insisted that no three costumes should be alike.

Cannon fired from the fortress of Saints Peter and Paul announced the start of the masquerade procession, which set out from the Palace and crossed the Neva to reach the Church where the nuptial blessing was given by a ninety-year-old priest.

The Prince-Pope on this occasion wore his full pontifical costume. The married pair were surrounded by Cupids all decked about with paper roses. A stag tied to the seat of the sledge played the part of coachman and a goat took the place of a footman.

Romodanovsky, as King David, led the march clad in a bearskin and holding a lyre. Field-Marshal Prince Menshikov, Grand Admiral Apraxin, and the Grand Master of the Artillery, Bruce, were clad as burgomasters of Hamburg, and played the hurdy-gurdy; the Residents of the Emperor, of the Elector of Hanover, and the States-General of Holland, like German shepherds, played on bagpipes; the Czarewitch Alexis played the horn; the Czarina Catherine, the Czarina Martha, Feodor's widow, and several ladies of their suite played the pipe.

In the midst of a wild troop of disguises: Poles scraping the violin, Roman Catholic bishops wearing stag's horns, Kalmucks playing the balalaika, Venetians armed with whistles, Lutheran pastors wearing masks, savages from Honduras brandishing lances, Japanese, Esquimaux, Tunguses and whale fishers, Peter, pipe in mouth, muffled up in his eternal Dutch sailor's dress, beat triumphantly on his drum.

The whole of Saint Petersburg was in the streets. The crowds had been ordered to shout " This is the Patriarch's wedding! Hurrah for the Patriarch and his wife! "

In the following May the Czar invited the foreign envoys, who had been soaked to the bone after a miserable trip at sea, to come to Peterhof and join in a drinking party. Three parts stupefied with the fumes of their wine, and coughing horribly, for they had been forced to sleep in the open without having been allowed to dry their clothes, they were all woken up next morning at four o'clock. His Majesty handed out an axe to each one, and bade them come with him. He brought them

into a wood, marked out an alley through it and gave the order to set to work to cut down the trees. At seven o'clock, and their task finished, the Czar thanked them for being so obliging and invited them to the Palace for that evening. They were regaled with Tokay and copious liqueurs. At length they went staggering away to bed. At midnight they were sent for again and made to go to the rooms of the Prince of Circassia who was in bed with his wife. Orders were for them to stay in the nuptial chamber all night emptying bottles in plenty. At eight in the morning, orders to go back to the castle for breakfast. Meekly they obeyed. Orders to swallow glasses of vodka at one gulp. Now they were bidden to take the air on a high hill. They came down again and at the bottom found a peasant with eight wretched old nags with neither saddle nor stirrups. Each took a mount, and in this comic array they paraded before their Majesties propped on their elbows in their bedroom window.

Peter knew no other master than his own whim. Everyone must always do what he wished, for choice useless, inept, or dirty things, and generally things he did himself. He drinks, everybody must drink; he dances, everybody must dance; he climbs a mast, everybody must scramble up behind him; he makes game of the Pope and the late Patriarch, everybody must do the same. But if he suddenly takes it into his head to wish to honour God, then honoured He must be and that immediately.

At the end of this year 1715, he fell seriously ill, and asked to have the sacraments administered. Immediately an ukase ordered his subjects to confess and communicate at least once a year.

A week later the Czarina Martha died. Peter Tolstoy bore the crown adorned with precious stones. The ceremony proceeded with perfect order and dignity. His civilized Majesty,

by an ukase dated the same day, had forbidden the usual lamentings and mouthings. But the night before, His barbarous Majesty had himself personally made the autopsy of the dead body. Far too long had Peter ached to know if the rumour of the virtue of the girl so long ago married to the moribund Feodor was justified or not. His examination having established the truth of the popular notion, he was so pleased that he granted Admiral Apraxin, the dead woman's brother, a life-interest in the dowager's property. For he was freed from a serious uncertainty that had bothered him for nearly thirty years.

Nothing could stop the Czar when he wished to satisfy a personal whim, whether it was the lightest of trifles or something serious and important. And that is why he dug himself in at Saint Petersburg, contrary to all the dictates of good sense.

If he had really been guided only by the great political design now attributed to him, to secure for his country convenient communications with Europe by sea, he would not have remained there. He would have installed himself at Reval, and in the first place at Riga.

But once more the man gave orders to the sovereign. Peter made Saint Petersburg first a port, then a capital, because the estuary of the Neva presented what in his eyes was the incomparable advantage of allowing him to build, among its islands, a city in the likeness of Amsterdam.

Facts proved him wrong immediately. The English and Dutch sea captains disdained to go to Saint Petersburg and continued to use Archangel.

Peter was indignant, for he did not like to be crossed. The reasons for their preference were respectfully explained to him. Hemp, which was the Muscovites' main export commodity, reached the new port burdened with heavy transport costs,

because that port did not enjoy a system of waterways into the interior so highly developed as the old one. It was therefore to the foreigners' advantage, even taking into account the difference in sea-freight, to buy the product at Archangel.

And so they were obstinate; Peter grew stubborn too; and they had to yield in the end. The position of Saint Petersburg was unfavourable; very well, he would improve it, he would dig canals. He simply forgot that he had no money. Once more the indispensable John Perry was put in charge of these chimerical works. But the English engineer was tired of receiving promises and instructions instead of salary. Let these dogs leave him in peace. He drew out the plans, then irate and resentful, folded his arms and did no more.

His Majesty showed more energy. He built custom houses, warehouses, and even a tribunal of commerce in imitation of Amsterdam. The only thing lacking was goods in the storehouses.

Peter did not allow himself to be disregarded for very long. On November 5, 1713, he signed an ukase prohibiting the sale of hemp elsewhere than at Saint Petersburg. This measure had its results. In 1712, only sixteen ships had come there; in 1715 fifty-three. The Czar had won and was delighted. The merchants that his decision had ruined were not so pleased.

Saint Petersburg was a bad commercial port; Kronslot and Cronstadt, which completed it, were execrable war ports. It was impossible to leave Cronstadt except with the wind due east; ships quickly rotted in it because the water of the sea here was deficient in salt; the species of trees in the adjacent forests were all unsuitable for shipbuilding.

The capital was doomed to have the same character of an artificial creation. It cost enormously to build it in the middle of

pestilential marshes, not in money, for the workmen only drew half a rouble every month, but in human lives. From 1708 to 1713, a hundred and thirty thousand men perished from fever and hunger in that delicious spot which Peter continued to call his " paradise of the Neva."

At the end of 1715, the city was still nothing but a confused group of villages one after another, like the plantations in the East Indies. As the country around was gloomy of aspect, Peter planted gallows at every five versts to enliven the landscape, and they served to hang individuals caught pillaging the forests. In this wholly uncultivated region, which consequently was forced to import its provisions from long distances, wolves were so numerous that they came up to the very doors nightly and even devoured the sentries.

Saint Petersburg nevertheless continued to develop. Peter had ordered all the nobles at Court to have a palace there. He set the example by building two from his own plans, for he was an architect, too, on occasion. He builded just the same way as he thought: upside down. A French artist corrected his mistakes later. He remained the inventor of an original system of a double ceiling, which he applied in his private apartments: it consisted in decreasing the height of the rooms in such a way that one had the agreeable illusion of being ensconced in a hovel.

The Governor, Field-Marshal Menshikov, the owner of the island that was called for that reason the Prince's Island, lived in a huge stone palace in the Italian style, the great hall of which on the first floor was used in the same way as the old *Salle Lefort* in Moscow. Admiral Apraxin occupied a part of the Admiralty buildings. At night he placed his compass beside his bed, and still saw it in his dreams. General Bruce lived in the Muscovite quarter, in a very handsome house, crowned, of

course, with an observatory that blazed all night above the sleeping city.

If the Senate still held its sessions in a poor wooden building, the new apothecaries' shops with their blue china jars were the finest in the world. A garden adorned with bowers contained a magnificent grotto and instead of the hut that had sheltered the Persian elephant there was the celebrated globe of Gottorp to be wondered at. It had cost a terrific amount to bring it, with sledges and rollers, over the snow all the way from Koenigsberg.

Another curiosity, no less extraordinary, was the chimes bought in Rotterdam. Their wild hubbub was nothing like the slow pealing of the bells in Moscow. Every day the great flag of the fortress was run up as in Holland, and as in Holland, you crossed the streets in light skiffs. But the Muscovite boatmen were less skilful than the Dutch. They were continually drowning the fares.

Saint Petersburg had been flooded not long before. His Majesty, trembling lest his canals might not be quite as deep as those of Amsterdam, where no such thing had ever happened, hurried to the house of the Dutch Resident. But that donkey did not know the exact measurements of the canals in his own native city. Peter made a note on his tablets, which never left him, to write to Witsen about it.

That letter remained merely an intention, for Louis XIV had just died. His agent in Paris advised the Czar that numbers of artists were consequently left without employment. The Czar bade him send him a whole batch of them at once. Always practical, he hoped to have them cheap. Tired of imitating Amsterdam, he was preparing to copy Versailles.

And that is why before long Rastrelli, Leblanc, Legendre, Davalet and Caravaque landed in his capital.

His Majesty then ordered Peter Lefort, the nephew of François, to go to Paris and increase their numbers there. Afterwards there were engaged the celebrated architect Leblond, the sculptor Nicolas Sineau, stone-cutters, masons, carvers, metal-casters, goldsmiths, jewellers, gardeners, tapestry-weavers, dyers, upholsterers, type-founders, wagon-makers, joiners and workers in wrought iron, to make coaches and carriages.

By a strange repercussion the end of the Great King determined the birth of a new Saint Petersburg which was not perhaps to be essentially French, since it was already rather Dutch and a trifle Italian, but which would never be purely Muscovite.

This capital, so full of defects, suddenly acquired a symbolical value. It was to be the first town of European Russia. Chance had a great deal to do with it. But all the same the credit of having founded it is due to Peter.

PART FOUR

CHAPTER ONE

AT THE beginning of 1716, the Czar, who was making ready to join Repnin's army in Mecklenburg, turned, it would appear, for the last time, to Alexis.

Since their home-coming from Torgau, the antagonism between the two had not ceased to grow, on the one side brutal, sullen and sly on the other.

Peter had speedily discovered that his son had learned nothing at all in Germany. When he wanted to make him draw a plan of a fortress, to test his knowledge of the art of *fortofication,* the Czarewitch promptly managed to fake an accident and hurt his hand with a pistol shot.

Sickly and illiterate, bigoted and dissolute, excessively given to drunkenness, a coward in war, a cruel husband, more and more stupefied and terrorized, hating Saint Petersburg and only happy at Moscow, the heir spent his life, in the company of monks and doubtful advisers, wishing for his father's death and the revival of the Church. A fat, red-headed Finnish serf, with a brutish face, Afrosinia Fedorova, had become his mistress. He showed himself in public with this girl, and behaved to her with doglike submission.

Insulted, beaten, deceived, Charlotte had endured everything stoically enough. Only the walls of her room had seen her tears. After the birth of a daughter, Natalia, in 1714, the poor woman took pity upon Alexis down on his knees, sobbing, suddenly affectionate; and they were reconciled. But during the ensuing winter, the barbarian half-wit, with no cause whatever, fetched his wife, who was pregnant again, a great kick in the stomach.

On October 11, 1715, with horrible pangs, Charlotte gave birth to a boy who was given the Christian name of Peter, and on the 20th, the doctors pronounced her *in mortis limine.*

Admirably calm, she drew up her will and wrote to the Czar thanking him for his kindnesses to her. The Sovereign, himself confined to his bed, had himself carried to the dying woman's bedside, and touched by her courage told her that Alexis was unworthy of her.

During the night of the 21st, Charlotte refused to drink a draught that the doctors declared would save her, sighing: " Ah, leave me in peace, I do not wish to live any longer," and she died before daybreak. Without regret the gentle German princess, only twenty-one years old, left the " paradise of the Neva " for another that she hoped would not be so like hell.

On the 27th, a frigate painted black and with its rigging trimmed with crape bore the body to the Church of the citadel, in which His Majesty had decided that the members of the royal family should henceforth be laid to rest. But the crypts were not yet dug. The coffin was to remain a long time in a corner exposed to the wind and the rain among the debris of plaster and rubble.

On the night of the funeral, the widower, who had fainted three times before the body of his victim, received a sealed note from his father. The letter was antedated as if it had been written on October 11. Now on that very day of the funeral, Catherine in her turn had been brought to bed of a son whose birth was not announced till the next. Alexander in a daze read the long epistle.

The Czar opened by declaring that his joy at having learned how to defeat their eternal enemies the Swedes was surpassed by his grief when he considered the person who was to succeed him.

He then reproached his son for his ignorance of the art of war. " How will you be able to judge and to punish your generals if you do not thoroughly understand their profession? "

He trembled lest, once he had gone, men might avoid and shrink from the hard service of arms through the fault of his heir. The ill health Alexis put forward as his excuse was a mere piece of hypocrisy. It was no bar to a taste for military things. " Remember the late King of France, he appeared very little with his armies, but he occupied himself with love. He made his Kingdom glorious above all others."

It horrified Peter to leave his field sown with grain to the idle servant of whom the Gospel speaks, who buried his talent in the ground. " You are willing to do or to learn nothing; once in power you would have to be fed like a little bird with its open beak." In vain had he scolded him and beaten him, nothing had been of avail. Let not Alexis " put his trust in the fact that he is his only son." The young man must amend his ways or he will be disinherited. " I spare neither my own life nor that of any of my subjects; I do not intend to make an exception for you."

The Czarewitch showed the letter to his counsellors, Wiazensky, Lapuhin and Kikin. What ought he to do? Pretend cunningly to renounce the throne, they replied. And so he wrote obediently:

> " Gracious Sire, my father. To-day, the 27th October, after the burial of my wife, I have read your letter that has been delivered to me; I can make no other answer except to ask you to deprive me of the crown of Russia and to acquiesce in your will. I make you my humble request in this, Sire, I feel that I am not equal to my task; I am without powers of memory, which is a great hindrance in all things; I am weak in my body and my mind through divers illnesses, incapable of governing a great people, at whose head there is needed a stronger man than I am. I therefore make no

claim, and shall never in the future make a claim, to Your Majesty's succession, especially since heaven has also given me a brother.[1] I call God on my soul to witness, in faith whereof I am writing this with my own hand.

" I confide my children to your keeping, and only ask you to grant me wherewith to live until my death. And so I abandon myself to your discretion and mercy. Your most humble slave and son."

Peter did not reply immediately to this note. His illness had grown worse, and during the whole month of November 1715, he did not leave his bed.

On January 19th, as the hour of departure was drawing near, he returned to the charge, sending his son a letter with this endorsement: *Last warning.* He was too much of a deceiver himself not to have observed that the renunciation of Alexis gave him no security. He did not hide this from the Czarewitch:

" If you do not fear me now, how should you respect my last will after I am gone? How am I to believe in your oaths? All men are liars, said King David, and even if you were sincere and honest to-day, the big-beards would have little trouble to persuade you after me. Everybody knows that you hate my works, and that when I am dead you will destroy all that I have done for the good of my people. It is impossible for you to remain like this, neither fish nor flesh. Change

[1] This phrase taken in conjunction with the date of the letter is of considerable importance. It establishes the fact that already on the 27th, Alexis knew that his stepmother had given birth to a boy. Now the Russian historians maintain that the Czar had sent his letter before the birth of a new male child, which was only announced on the next day, October 28th, no doubt because the Court was in mourning. Which is manifestly untrue. This point once established, it is more readily understood why Peter had antedated his letter, and also the concealed motives that guided him in this sudden violent offensive against the Czarewitch.

your nature, show yourself an heir worthy of me, or be a monk: if not, my spirit will never know repose, especially now that my health is so unsound. Answer me immediately by letter or by word of mouth. If you do not obey me I will treat you as a criminal."

The innermost thoughts of the Czar were not in exact agreement with this categorical and peremptory tone. He wished to throw Eudoxia's son into the shade to the exaltation of Catherine's son, but without going too fast, so as to avoid stirring up the opposition during his absence.

The definite reply of the Czarewitch accordingly gave him more annoyance than satisfaction.

" Sire, my father," wrote Alexis. " I have received your letter this morning but cannot reply to it at more length because I am ill. I wish to enter holy orders, and I beg you to grant me your gracious permission to do this."

The young man's friends had convinced him easily that a monk's bonnet is not nailed on a man's head, and that there is no monastery from which you cannot escape given a favourable combination of circumstances. Alexis understood this very well, and sent to his confessor the following laconic note, which safeguarded the future: " I am going into the monastery, being forced to do so."

Peter was caught in his own trap, and found himself embarrassed. He was counting on the frightened slyboots asking for delay. He feared, in fact, that the decision of the prince, if it followed too closely upon the birth of his second son, might appear to the eye of the public much more constrained than sincere.

The day before his departure he paid a visit to Alexis, who was hidden under the blankets feigning illness.

" Reflect and consider. I shall wait for another six months," said the Czar.

The new respite contradicted the *last warning*. But His Majesty kept in his pocket the two letters, which might be of service later.

He then went off to Germany where other vexations awaited him.

Peter had planned to marry his niece Catherine, one of the daughters of Ivan, to the Duke of Mecklenburg, promising him by way of dowry several towns that still had to be taken from the Swedes, one of which was Wismar. In April 1716, the allies did actually force this place to surrender, but they refused to allow Repnin to enter it. The Muscovites had been fooled once again.

Disgustedly Peter, who was suffering from an attack of paralysis localized in one arm, went off to take the waters at Pyrmont. Someone had already leaped into a post-chaise eager to join him there. This was Leibnitz.

After Torgau they had met in 1712 at Carlsbad. Leibnitz had armed himself with a magnetic globe of the world and an apparatus for the projection of fortifications. In return for these presents, the Czar bestowed on him the title of privy councillor. But that was now too little for the great man. He had wished to be His Majesty's ambassador at Vienna. He continued to wish to make the sciences flourish in Muscovy, regarding them as too little cultivated in Germany.

" The country where these things are most cared for," declared Leibnitz, " will be the country dearest to me, since the whole human race will always be advantaged by it and its true riches augmented. For the true riches of mankind are the arts and sciences. This it is that most of all distinguishes man from the beasts, and educated peoples from barbarian races."

This sort of reasoning contained nothing to captivate the practical mind of the Czar. If Bruce, who usually answered the philosopher's innumerable letters, had been there, the genial Scotsman would have given a reply in kind. But Peter by himself had not a word to utter. The talkative fellow's praises flattered him, the essential substance of his dissertations bored him. He might perhaps have been more responsive to his new present, a wooden mechanical apparatus for his paralysed arm, if Leibnitz, who did not know his Muscovite very well, had not reminded him, while setting out his great political designs, that he had never had his promised pension.

This man of science gave His Majesty the impression of an unconscionable beggar. . . . A class of people to be avoided at all costs. In any case they were never to meet again. A few weeks later Leibnitz departed this life, having to the very end retained his illusions about a monarch who had had very few about him.

Peter on parting from him, almost cured, went to Copenhagen.

He appeared there in a green bonnet, his neck tightly swathed in a black soldier's stock, his shirt fastened with a heavy silver button set with imitation jewels, a brown overcoat, and with much-darned stockings and very dirty shoes as usual.

Always anxious to learn, he visited first of all the natural history museum, and went into ecstasies over a mummy, asking to have it given him. The director of the museum referred him to his master, who returned a courteous refusal to the request. The Czar went back to see the curiosity, smashed the glass, ripped the bandages away, and tore off the nose.

"Now you can keep it!" he chuckled.

Some time later he gave wise advice on economy to the King of Denmark.

" I have heard," whispered Frederick, " that you had a mistress yourself."

He might have said several. The court of Catherine, like his sister Natalia's, served the Czar as a harem. All the ladies in the Czarina's suite had a child by him.

" Brother," he growled, " my whores cost me nothing much, but yours is costing you thousands of crowns that would be better employed elsewhere."

But the Czar had not come there to talk about women. The allies who had treated him lightly for years, had the touching thought to flatter his whims.

In August, Vice-Admiral Peter Mihailof reviewed in the roadstead of Copenhagen, the Muscovite, Danish, Dutch and English squadrons placed under his command. The two last-named were there only to add to the splendour of the spectacle. But it was agreed that the other two should make a joint demonstration in Scania.

On August 26th, the six months' respite granted to his son having expired, His Majesty returned for a moment to his domestic cares. He sent a new ultimatum to Alexis. Either the heir would behave like a prince by joining his father and making the campaign with him, or else, if he was determined to be a monk, he must at once choose his monastery. Peter felt so certain what the young man's answer would be, that without troubling which monastery the Czarewitch would prefer, he gave orders to prepare a cell in the monastery of Tver, which would be a kind of prison.

But an unexpected and dramatic thing happened. Alexis changed his mind and declared to Menshikov that he would submit. And on September 26th, accompanied by Afrosinia, he left Saint Petersburg to go and join the Czar.

Meanwhile the naval demonstration, in spite of the Vice-

Admiral's bravery, came to nothing. Peter proposed to put it off till the following year.

The allies, disappointed at first, became infuriated. They learned at the same time that, without advising them of the fact, the Muscovite had entered into direct conversations with the Swedish King by the intermediary of his ambassador at Amsterdam, and that the two gentlemen were quite simply aiming at a division of Mecklenburg and Pomerania between them.

The Danes, trembling lest the rogue should seize their capital, put it into a state of defence. The Elector of Hanover, the King of England, talked of sinking the Czar's fleet and taking possession of his person. Prussia behaved with less outcry and more action: she signed in Paris a secret convention with France by which she bound herself to cease hostilities if Stettin was given up to her.

In alarm, Peter ordered Sheremetev to evacuate Denmark, "because two bears never agree in one den," and to establish himself solidly in Mecklenburg.

He had had enough, and was at no further pains to conceal it, of Augustus and Frederick and George Louis. He had no confidence now in anyone but Charles. Quick to take a decision, he set out for Holland where for some months there had been living the King of Sweden's minister, an adventurer of soaring ambition: Baron Goertz.

On December 19, 1716, His Majesty landed at Amsterdam, surrounded by his ministers, diplomats, and a few of his favourites. Only Catherine was missing. She was actually travelling with him, but as she was pregnant once again, she had to be left behind at Wesel where she was taken with her travail.

In January another son was born. The Czar asked the High Powers to be the baby's godfather. But the baptism was never celebrated, for the child died almost immediately. The father held that rogue the Elector of Hanover responsible for the death, because his wife's coachman, on her way through that country, had been roughly handled by the post-boys at a certain post-house.

As soon as he had finished with the official receptions, a collation and a dramatic performance, the one-time workman of the shipyards of the East India Company went to greet his old acquaintances.

He found the former burgomaster, Witsen, very old and ill, in his bed. When he met Professor Ruysch, he held out both hands exclaiming, "There is my master in surgery." He seemed greatly grieved to hear that Kardinaal and the elder Van der Heyden, the man of the fire-extinguishing pump, were dead. He embraced a foreman in the Company's yards, and the wife of Peter Pool who reminded him that *Master Peter* had dined at her house nineteen years ago.

Not till March 5th, for a serious indisposition had forced him to keep his bedroom for some time, did he go back to Zaandam. Noomen, who in the old days had sold him flannel for his rheumatism, observed that His Majesty had less objection now to showing himself. Peter sailed on the Y with his company, without any great annoyance at being stared at.

A great dinner was to take place at the Calfs' in his honour, and he wished to have Gerrit Kust invited to it. But the smith refused to go to the banquet.

"I don't give a fig for the Czar," roared the stout old fellow. "He still owes me for his rent."

The bad payer sent his old landlord a silver tankard with apologies. He showed the house to Catherine, who was now

fully recovered, and who accompanied him on to Utrecht and Rotterdam.

Lefort had sent him from Paris a painter whose face pleased the Sovereign. Peter ordered the young man to make a picture showing the battle of Poltava, the portraits of his wife and the members of his court. And the good Nattier fell to work at once.

Often the Czar was seen to be careworn and angry. For five months he had had no news of Alexis.

His Majesty had at first waited for his son at Lübeck, whither he had gone after leaving Copenhagen, as the Czarewitch had told the official courier from Saint Petersburg, whom he met at Dantzig, that he was proceeding to that town. But after a few days, as the prince did not appear, the court went on its way again. At Schwerin, already seized with some suspicion, Peter had told his wife to write to Menshikov. The Field-Marshal knew nothing either about Alexis, except that he had been seen at Libau and Dantzig. The Czar now realized that Alexis had made a fool of him. The rascal, under pretence of joining him, had simply made his escape. He was fully resolved to catch the runaway. But all search and inquiries had so far brought very little result.

During December and January, the officers of Adam Weyde's corps sent off from Mecklenburg in pursuit of the young man had been satisfied with reporting ten times over his passing through Koenigsberg and Dantzig. From the last town all trace of him was completely lost.

The Czar's ambassador at Vienna, Vesselovsky, who was searching through Germany along the way to Austria, had more luck. In January he found in the register of persons coming into Frankfort on the Oder the following entry under the date of October 20: " Lieutenant-Colonel Kochansky of Mos-

cow, with his wife and servants, staying at the inn of the *Golden Goose.*"

The *Golden Goose* inn, questioned by him, had given a twofold description of the couple that corresponded to Alexis and Afrosinia. The man had black moustaches in the French fashion and his wife was short and fat. The travellers had left for Breslau. And in fact at Breslau, then at Neisse and lastly at Prague, sometimes in a post-house, sometimes in a tavern, everywhere there were memories of a Lieutenant-Colonel Kochansky, who at the last mentioned city had asked for horses for Vienna.

Vesselovsky, continuing his journey, had speedily reached the capital of the Empire. But here there was no Kochansky in the register of persons entering. However, there was pointed out to him, under the date of November 9, the arrival of a Pole, Kremenetzky, accompanied by his wife and four servants, and installed in the *Black Eagle.*

The ambassador went to the innkeeper, and at once identified the pretended Kremenetzky. He learned that the gentleman had bought a male costume for his wife, who had put it on immediately. Then they had gone off on foot, a servant had paid the bill, and in the afternoon a carriage had fetched their baggage. The innkeeper knew nothing further.

Vesselovsky visited all the inns in Vienna without success. Nowhere had a Kochansky or a Kremenetzky been received. A postmaster some miles outside Vienna confided to the ambassador that the person for whom he was seeking had inquired the cost of a carriage for Rome. Without losing a moment he sent a courier to an abbé of his acquaintance at the Papal Court, begging him to set inquiries on foot. The other declared that he could assure him the Czarewitch was not in Rome. Where could he be hiding?

Vesselovsky explained to His Majesty that this time the track seemed lost. Peter ordered him to persevere and in March reinforced him with the handsome captain of the guards, Rumiantsov, one of his dearest friends.

Meanwhile the conversations were proceeding between Goertz and the Muscovite Resident in Amsterdam, Kurakin, more and more enamoured of French elegance and French literature, rather incompetent, though tenacious and astute, but a very fine gentleman with a great air.

Under a less brilliant exterior his opposite number had more depth. His appearance was sinister. All the diplomats who had come in contact with him, and he had known them all from Stanhope to Châteauneuf, from the Abbé Dubois to the Grand Pensionary Heinsius, were agreed in calling him a twister, a bandit and a traitor. There was no enormity of which he was thought incapable, no crime of which he was not suspected, without its being possible to lay a finger on any.

He had begun his strange career as Minister to the Duke of Holstein, and with the connivance of Saxony, Prussia and Hanover, had tried to get for his master part of the spoils of Charles, and the hand of one of the daughters or nieces of the Czar. Suddenly at Stralsund he offered his services to Charles, who had just got back from Turkey, won his confidence, and became his favourite. A man of resource, he first proved himself an ingenious financier, and then took charge of his ancient enemy's foreign affairs. He always seemed straightforward and always remained mysterious.

The plan the minister was then upholding was of wide scope. If it were adopted, it would change the face of Europe. It had captivated Charles; it had dazzled Peter; it was to clash against insurmountable difficulties.

To begin with, Goertz, whom certain persons believed

bought by Vienna, while his real interests were in a different direction, neglected the Emperor, who was preoccupied with the Turks and the Spanish question, and also roused against the Czar whom he had recently enjoined to evacuate Germany.

Goertz next wished to embroil the allies among one another. This was already a *fait accompli.* His first objective was to isolate Denmark and to tear Holstein from her; the second to set up Stanislas again in Poland; the third, and perhaps the principal one in his eyes, to restore the throne of England to the Pretender.

Peter, who met the minister twice personally at the castle of Loo, did not disapprove of any of these three objects. Frederick he did not like; he was heartily sick of Augustus, and in open hostility with George. But he would not betray them for nothing. What would he be given in return? Saint Petersburg of course, an important slice of the trans-Baltic possessions of Sweden, which would compensate itself at the expense of Norway, and a marriage with the Duke of Holstein.

These machinations could only hold together if Paris, still linked with Sweden by a subsidizing treaty, found nothing inconvenient in them.

Torcy would no doubt have supported them because they had the merit of falling in with the traditional policy of Louis XIV, without neglecting the new factor of a Muscovy intervening in the affairs of Europe. In short, Goertz proposed to the Duc d'Orléans, to replace, under pretext of mediation, the former Swedish alliance by a Russo-Swedish alliance.

He was too late. France had changed enemy. She was no longer turned against Austria, she was turned against Spain. Since Philip V was claiming the succession to the Great King, as Duke of Anjou, and since the Regent wished to retain power, and also to satisfy the demand for peace that was manifesting

itself in the country, France had been brought to join up with the members of the defunct coalition.

The Triple Alliance, comprising France, England, and Holland, had been concluded on January 4th. And Dubois, always keeping his Cardinal's hat in mind, would never rest until it became Quadruple by the adherence of the Emperor, now the Czar's enemy.

Goertz, to succeed, could not do without Paris, and Paris could not follow Goertz, who was protecting the Pretender whom France had expelled, and who needed Alberoni, whose agent Cellamare was plotting to overthrow the Regent.

Did Peter grasp the fact that Goertz' plan was doomed to certain failure? He sized up at least how difficult it would be to realize in its completeness. And in order to obtain, like Prussia, the mediation of France, he had it in his mind to simplify it and even to carry it further. To Goertz' blunder succeeded the blunder of the Czar who did not perceive that France was detaching herself from the Swedish alliance.

At the beginning of April he resolved to go to Paris and try his luck. Catherine would remain at The Hague. He did not venture to show himself with her in the most polished court in the world, and we can divine that he himself was embarrassed beforehand at the idea of appearing there as a sovereign.

He took with him Kurakin, who, as he spoke French, would act as interpreter, Vice-Chancellor Baron Shaffirov, Peter Tolstoy, Prince Dolgoruky, Lieutenant-General Buturlin, Adjutant-General Yagujinsky, his secretary Makarov, his first physician Erskine, a Scots Jacobite and Goertz' secret agent, and his Portuguese fool Acosta who held the title of Director-General of Buffooneries.

A court marshal, chamberlains, clerks of all kinds and a fairly numerous staff of domestics completed the train. One figure

stands out from the group, that of Ostermann, the Councillor of the Chancery. The Czar had picked him up on a boat five years before, a Westphalian and an old alumnus of the University of Jena, who besides German and Slav knew French and Italian. Active, a tremendous worker, an adroit thief like everybody else, he spent his days in his office wrapped about in an extraordinary old velvet dressing-gown that was no stranger to the regard in which His Majesty held him.

On April 11th, Peter and his suite reached Antwerp by yacht, through the Scheldt and the Rupel, for the Sovereign only liked travelling by water. They then came to Brussels, getting there in the evening of the 14th.

And at once the everlasting comedy began again. The Czar declined the two palaces that were offered for his quarters, and wished to stay in the little house of Charles the Fifth at the bottom of the park, more suited to his humour, he said.

The next day, very early, he jumped into a hackney carriage to drive to the Carthusian monastery where he heard there was a monk of great skill in the art of turning on the lathe.

Then he consented to receive the Marquis de Prié, the governor of the Austrian Low-Countries, who invited him to dinner.

On the 16th, he visited Saint Gudule, and wished to drink the water in a public fountain. On the 17th, he supped with the Duke of Holstein who gave a splendid display of fireworks in his honour.

On the 19th, having left Brussels the previous day, he embarked at Ghent for Dunkirk. Never before had Peter gone so far in Europe. He was extraordinarily troubled at going into France. That was why he decided to be twice as arrogant in that country.

CHAPTER TWO

THE Regent, who would very gladly have been spared this costly visit, sent to meet His Majesty at Dunkirk, a gentleman in ordinary of the King's Chamber, M. de Liboy.

This gentleman's face lengthened when he saw on April 21, 1717, fifty-seven persons disembarking behind the Czar. He was afraid that he was insufficiently provided with the funds necessary for their entertainment, and offered fifteen hundred livres a day to cover everybody when Kurakin immediately, according to the Muscovite custom, attacked the question of entertainment.

The indignant ambassador closed his mouth; the sum suggested was too ridiculous. The other objected that they had not looked forward to such a numerous suite. The word gave offence. Numerous! But there were more to come; they would be eighty all told. Liboy, simply terrified, sent a courier to Paris.

The Regent answered magnificently that there was to be no niggardliness. The important thing was that His Majesty should be pleased. And to help in that design it would be a useful thing to know how this court behaved.

" It is very changeable, and irresolute," replied Liboy, " and very subject to fits of bad temper from the throne down to the stables. The Czar rises early, dines about ten o'clock, sups about seven and goes to bed at nine. He drinks liqueurs before meals, beer and wine in the afternoon, sups frugally and sometimes not at all. He eats all our dishes and drinks our wines, with the exception of champagne. He has always at hand two or three dishes prepared by his own cook, leaves a sumptuously served table to eat in his bedroom, has his beer brewed for him by a man of his own, finding what is served to him abominable and complaining about everything. The nobles like what is good and are excellent judges of it. I have not yet been able to

perceive any kind of council or conference for serious business unless they discuss affairs while tippling."

The troubles began again when they were about to start on their journey. Peter refused to take a place in a coach, and Kurakin imitated him.

"Nobody has ever seen a gentleman riding in a hearse," he sneered.

He insisted on berlines. That did not meet with His Majesty's views, who would have preferred a two-wheeled carriole such as he used at Saint Petersburg. The town and all about were hunted through before one to his taste was discovered. And then he no longer wanted it.

Peter set out all the same for Calais. There he became gallant, teased and pulled about the president's wife, and demanded to have with him a naval officer who could speak Dutch. M. Vandermesch, Captain of a flute, was presented to him, and took his fancy. He showed himself less pleased when there was attached to him the brilliant Marquis de Mailly-Nesle who owed this great honour "to an ancient prerogative right in his family to meet foreign kings when they enter France by way of Picardy." It made him impatient that this nobleman should change his costume every day.

"Is his tailor so bad then that he couldn't find a coat made to his liking!" growls Peter.

Decidedly His Majesty would not stir from Calais until a vehicle had been built to suit him. The grotesque affair he devised was a sort of litter borne by horses on which was fixed the body of an old phaeton raked up among a pile of carriages cast aside as useless. He would not deign to dismount from this except at the entrance of towns, which he went through in a coach.

"I still do not know if the Czar will sleep at Boulogne or at

Montreuil," wrote the Marquis to the Regent. "I wish with all my heart he was arrived in Paris and even that he had gone away again. When His Royal Highness has seen him and when he has stayed in Paris a few days, I am persuaded, if I may venture to say so, that he will not be sorry to be rid of him."

The next day, it had been decided to spend the night at Amiens. Peter changed his mind and meant to push on as far as Beauvais. They told him that relays had not been prepared. He replied with a torrent of abuse.

The Intendant of Picardy, M. de Bernage, declares himself vexed that His Majesty had swept past his capital. "You will perhaps find it hard to believe," he writes to the Maréchal d'Huxelles, "that the Czar passed through this town without my having had the honour of seeing him. We were waiting for him at the bishop's palace, and were counting on his coming at least to take some refreshment." And not to lose his *spread,* he begged the ladies to come and eat the supper.

The Count-Bishop of Beauvais had the same annoying experience. He had prepared a concert of instruments and voices, and a display of fireworks, and placed in the monarch's bedchamber portraits of the Grand Duke and Duchess of Muscovy, the Czar's father and mother. All these preparations were wasted. Peter halted a quarter of a league away in a wretched tavern where he only spent eighteen francs all told for his own meal and for his people, pulling a napkin out of his own pocket and using it as a tablecloth.

On May 7th, at midday, the Czar arrived at Beaumont where he was expected by the Maréchal de Tessé, sent by the Duc d'Orléans to be attached to his person. M. de Saint Simon had recommended him to the Regent as a man who had no occupation, who was well versed in the ways and the speech of

good society, accustomed to foreigners through his journeys in war and in negotiations, who was both suave and polite, and would infallibly carry off the position exceedingly very well.

That same evening at nine o'clock, escorted by three hundred mounted grenadiers, the Czar entered Paris. He was taken to the Louvre by the rue Saint Denis and the rue Saint-Honoré, both illuminated and with their windows crammed with onlookers. The apartments of the Queen-Mother had been assigned to him. The beautiful bed given to the King by Madame de Maintenon, the richest thing in the world, had been put up in it. In the great hall of the Palace there had been prepared two tables of sixty covers magnificently laid. To house his suite the French Academy had been asked to give up its hall of assembly. Completely indifferent to all this zealous goodwill Peter looked at nothing, asked for a piece of bread and radishes, tasted six kinds of wine, swallowed two glasses of beer, blew out the candles, of which there were, he thought, too many, and declared that he wanted to go somewhere else to stay.

At the advice of Peter Tolstoy, who had preceded the Sovereign to Paris, other apartments had been made ready in the Hôtel des Lesdiguières in the rue de la Cerisaie. His Majesty found them still too fine and had a camp bed put down for him in a closet.

The next morning, May 8th, the Regent came to see the Czar, who embraced him with a great air of superiority, showed him the door of his study, and without the least form of civility, went in first himself. The conversation lasted for nearly an hour without a word of business, Kurakin fulfilling the office of interpreter.

Saturday and Sunday were spent in wranglings over matters of etiquette in which the infernal Muscovite pride was dis-

played even to childishness. The ambassador insisted that a document should be given him attesting that if his master was not receiving the high honours due to him it was because he himself had declined them. Attempts were made to explain to him that it arose from the despatches establishing that His Majesty had come incognito. Kurakin was obstinate. For the sake of peace the paper he wanted was signed. But things went wrong afresh. Peter had decided that he would not budge out of the hôtel before the King had paid him a visit. It had been taken for granted that the Czar would make the first visit. But the little King Louis XV would be sent to him on Monday.

In these circumstances he condescended to listen to the compliments of the municipal body of the city of Paris, which laid at his feet the customary presents: a dozen dozens of white wax candles and a dozen dozen boxes of dried fruits and as many packets with blue ribbons in six baskets of white wicker.

Two exactly similar armchairs had been placed in the room for the royal visit. Louis sat in one on the right hand, and Peter in the left hand one. The boy, who was accompanied by the Duc de Maine and the Maréchal de Villeroi, politely recited a short complimentary speech to which the Czar replied as follows through Kurakin:

> " My brother, for a long time I wished to see a King of France; to-day I have the satisfaction of seeing Your Majesty, who promise to repeat all the great deeds of your ancestors. I know several languages, I would willingly have forgetten them all to know French alone so that I might converse with Your Majesty."

Then all at once, to the stupefaction of the ceremonious old Maréchal, Peter took the King under the two armpits, swung him up and kissed him.

"Sire, this is not the kiss of Judas," he breathed into the little face of the prince, who seemed not the slightest degree alarmed.

He found this seven-year-old boy very agreeable in face and figure, and sufficiently intelligent for his age. He wrote as much to Catherine and added:

" The King is two fingers longer than our dwarf Lukas."

Peter paid his visit to Louis the next day at the Tuileries accompanied by the principal members of his suite and by the Maréchal de Tessé. The French and Swiss guards attended him under arms, the drums beating the assembly.

Now that his pride was fully satisfied, tired of having sulked indoors for three days, he made eager haste to explore the most famous capital in the world.

On the morning of May 11th, he went to see the Place Royal, the Place des Victoires and the Place Vendôme. He was clad in a grey overcoat of coarse woollen stuff, a waistcoat of grey woollen cloth with diamonds for buttons, without a cravat, without cuffs, nor lace at the wristlets of his shirt. He had a little cape like a travelling cape and a silver belt over his coat from which there hung a cutlass in the Eastern fashion.

It was in this array that he went on the 12th at half-past seven to the Gobelins factory. The idea had come to him at eleven o'clock the night before. The night was spent in hanging the court with tapestries. Peter examined everything, questioned every worker, covered his tablets with notes, kissed an apprentice liquorishly, and as he went left a crown behind for everybody. The art and craft of the tapestry weaver had no longer any secrets from him. He explained to Menshikov in a long letter how the artisans of this kind recently arrived from France were to be set to work. Let Caravaque draw a cartoon

representing the battle of Poltava! He wished to have as beautiful tapestries made at home as in this kingdom.

During five weeks the Czar, eager to see and to know, never stopped running here and there, intrepid, curious, agitated, jumping into a hackney coach, taking possession of the first carriage that stood at his door, keeping the Maréchal de Tessé, who was always hunting after him, in a perpetual state of alarm, making rendez-vous, countermanding them, unendurable, untiring, imagining himself the master everywhere he went, by turns punctilious and discourteously roughshod, and never doing anything but what came into his head.

He visited the Jardin des Plantes, the Arsenal, the workshops of the court joiner, and the great hall of the Louvre which contained the relief plans of all the King's fortresses. There he met with the Maréchal de Villars, to whom he behaved in the friendliest possible way, regaling him with a detailed account of the victory of Poltava.

The same evening the Duc d'Orléans took him to the Opera in his box. They were by themselves on the front seat. Peter went to sleep but woke up suddenly and asked if he might have some beer. A glass was brought. The Regent very politely rose up and taking it, presented it to the Czar, who keeping his seat seized the glass and then put it back on the salver. The public was astonished at these manners, which betrayed no great knowledge or habit of court life.

On May 15th, Peter went back to the Jardin des Plantes. The next day he went to the Invalides. He thought the house well kept. In the refectory he tasted the soldiers' stew and their wine, drank their health, slapped them on the shoulder, called them comrade. In the hospital he felt the pulse of a sick man who was, they told him, a hopeless case, meditated for a moment and declared that he would recover. He was delighted

to meet the Maréchal de Villars again, who did him the honours of the institution. He carried his graciousness so far as to be very cordial with Madame de Villars who had come as a sight-seer. This was specially noted, for ever since his arrival, he had fled from the ladies of the court and had so far only gone to pay his respects to Madame.

On the 17th, he dined at Meudon, admired the park, and gave a gratuity to a footman in the shape of one of Law's bank-notes which he had just put to an unpleasant use. On Tuesday, the 18th, he was at Issy at the home of Maréchal d'Estrées. This nobleman pleased him greatly by presenting him with many things relating to the sea. On Wednesday, the wax anatomical museum delighted the surgeon, and the Ménagerie pleased the savage in him. His delight induced him to give twenty-five sous to the turncock in charge.

Preferably on days when he took medicine and about five o'clock in the morning, His Majesty would receive the trades-people. He even ordered himself a new peruke. The tonsorial artist brought him one with long black hair, an excellent effect. Peter cut it about to his own taste and then obstinately insisted on offering seven livres ten sous when the maker asked twenty-five crowns for it. But he gave the clippings back. He bought a watch from Calley and a mechanically turning globe from Pigeon.

He climbed the towers of Notre Dame. He went through the library of the Louvre in company with the Abbé de Louvois. The Greek manuscripts made him yawn, but the gift of a dozen Van der Meulen prints delighted him. At the Observatory he conversed with the geographer Delisle and the chemist Geoffroy, who declared themselves amazed at the triviality and the childishness of the questions he put to them. He spent a whole day at the house of Pajot d'Ons, the Director of the Posts,

at Bercy, examining all kinds of curiosities both natural and mechanical. The celebrated Carmelite friar, Père Sebastien, demonstrated to him the finest of the machines. He was very cordial with him but disdained to speak to the Duchess de Rohan who had come as a *sightseer*. She complained at Court to her husband.

"Eh!" cried the duke, "what made you expect anything in the shape of good manners from that animal!"

A Muscovite nobleman who was standing near understood the phrase and took exception to it. The subsequent tirade did not last long as the Frenchman could not bring himself to carry on a dispute with the barbarian.

For by now people were beginning to know this sordidly drunken company. Everybody knew that the Czar admitted to his table and was continually kissing an aged dwarf with long white hair falling to his shoulders, dreadfully deformed and hideously ugly, and with a voice like the croaking of frogs. It was an astonishing thing to know that the bottles were flung about the table like quoits without ever coming to an anchor. It was thought very wild behaviour of the monarch to insist on having a contest between his chaplain Nadajinsky and an abbé who was Dubois' secretary, both famous drinkers. When the chaplain carried the day he threw himself on his neck and thanked him for saving the honour of Muscovy. The grand priest, as he was called in Paris, was also a rogue. He had pretended that the orthodox service called for a huge number of candles, and the Czar's servants were seen selling them again in the market.

Peter's grimaces and his unpolished manners had shocked the whole court. He showed no consideration or deference either for the princes and princesses of the blood or for the leading nobles. He was annoyed that the princes had made difficulties

about calling on him unless they were sure that he would pay a return visit to their wives: a suggestion he rejected with much disdain. Coming back from a dinner at Saint-Cloud, the Duchesse d'Orléans found his lack of gallantry unpleasant. At the Duchesse de Berry's Luxemburg he gave her no respite until she went off to la Muette, so that he could go through it in peace. In this palace he especially admired the Rubens pictures. All that lovely painted flesh dazzled him.

But on May 24th, when he was shown the Crown jewels he was merely bored. He confessed that he understood little of such things, that he had little interest in objects of mere beauty or pleasure, and that he liked above all useful and practical objects that dealt with sea affairs, with trade, with the necessary arts. He added, with genuine sincerity, that he cared nothing for beauties that were beyond his scope.

The Maréchal de Villeroy, highly pleased with his own cleverness, announced to His Majesty that they were about to show him the greatest treasure of France. But Peter was annoyed. He had had enough of these baubles. He calmed down, but without understanding the little play on words, on seeing little Louis in a study with a great roll of paper in his hand. The King gave this to him, telling him it was a map of his States. The Czar was flattered. He began to talk to the boy about the works undertaken at his initiative and meant to unite the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea, works that in any case had now been abandoned. And then he pointed out to him the whole of the route his army had followed before defeating Charles XII at Poltava.

In the afternoon Peter set out for Versailles, where the Maréchal de Tessé — with what great relief! — handed him over to the Duc d'Antin. The sovereign and his suite were lodged in

the château itself, and the governor was to be greatly annoyed at the news that these savages, including their master, had introduced public women into their apartments.

The next day, His Majesty, full of good humour, went boating on the lake and greeted d'Antin by splashing water over him with his oar.

On the 26th, carrying his proud mistress along in his train, the new Hercules slept at Marly, only interrupting his amorous prowess here to take a bath, the first one since his arrival, and to express the wish to see the procession of Notre Dame from a window.

On Sunday the 30th, the Duc d'Antin took him to dine in his house of Petit-Bourg, and to Fontainebleau in the afternoon. The place displeased him, and still more the stag hunt got up for his benefit. He made haste to return to his host's house. In the coach on the journey he ate and drank heartily and relieved himself as heartily. The carriage had to be scrubbed out on the way.

On the Tuesday, he embarked at Petit-Bourg to go back to Paris by water. He was absolutely set on passing under all the bridges of the capital. After which he went back to his prostitute at Marly.

He went to Chaillot to see the Queen of England, and on June 11th, to Saint-Cyr, to see Madame de Maintenon, who was ill and received him in bed in her room. He arrived at seven in the evening, asked to have the curtains at the side and the foot of the bed opened the better to see her, then did not know what to say to her, asked her about her health, saluted her very civilly and took his departure.

In Paris again on the 12th, he told this anecdote in Slavonic to the Regent, which seemed to him hardly worth translating into Latin.

Dixit ei salutavisse quemdam meretricem decies nocte in una, et, huic datis pro tanto labore tantum duobus nummis, tunc illam exclamavisse: Sane, Domine, ut vir magnifice, sed parcissime ut imperator mecum egisti.

His good spirits were darkened when he learned the state of negotiations between de Tessé and Shaffirov, who were discussing affairs in the gardens of the Hôtel des Lesdiguières.

He had himself opened the conversations, soon after his arrival, during a first interview with the Duc d'Orléans at the Palais-Royal.

" I have heard that you too have had a true friend such as I had in poor François Lefort when he was alive."

This unexpected preamble had roused the curiosity of His Royal Highness, who cast about to think who this eccentric person was alluding to. Grimacing in his usual way, Peter had pointed to Dubois. The abbé had declared himself flattered by the comparison but unworthy to sustain it, for his poor merits could not without mockery be set beside those of the illustrious Admiral-General whose exploits had dazzled the whole of Europe.

The Czar, delighted at having hit the nail on the head, had no more doubt that his plan would be accepted at once.

" Guarantee me my conquests," he proposed, " and I will guarantee you the treaties of Utrecht and Baden. Why did France join with Sweden? Because Sweden possessed states in Germany, which allowed her to balance the power of the Emperor. But now Sweden is falling into decay. Pay me the subsidies that you are now giving her, and I will take her place. I will bring you my power and the power of Prussia, without which I could not act. I take it upon myself also to bring Poland into this alliance, which is not against the Triple Alliance. In-

deed," he went on, " it is not to Holland's interest that the Emperor should be too strong. And lastly, England is fickle and perhaps will break away from France one day."

The Czar's plan, through the shortcomings of its author, the born imitator, retained the imprint of Goertz: it was opposed to George, it tended to return to the old European system. For these two reasons the Regent would not have it. He accordingly, after taking all proper precautions at Berlin, gave Tessé instructions to keep Peter balancing on the tight-rope until his departure.

Faithful to his instructions, Frederick William had sent to Paris Kniphausen, who was completely versed in all the affairs of the North. Prussia, linked as she was to France by a secret convention, must perforce also enter the alliance. And the play had begun.

It was easy to agree on the wording of the first article stipulating the establishing of eternal friendship between the three States. But it was not so easy to come to an understanding on the question of military diversions and subsidies.

The game of the Duc d'Orléans, who neither wished to bind himself to the Czar, nor to annoy him, was simple enough: to make use of the Prussian, to pretend that this ambassador had wide powers, and when the moment came, if no better expedient offered, to lament that he had not, to utter polite sighs, and put off the conversations till later with the intention of burying them for ever.

The stroke was dealt on June 12th. Peter came back from a visit to the Mint. There they had struck under his eyes a medal one side of which showed a bust of himself and the other a Fame moving from north to south with the Virgilian motto: *Vires acquirit eundo.* And so he appeared at the Hôtel Lesdiguières very well pleased.

But soon, having taken a turn round the garden with his advisers, his humour changed. He dismissed the others and walked about alone gesticulating. Now and then he stopped and leaned pensively on his *doubina,* or traced figures on the ground with every sign of agitation. He called Shaffirov, Kurakin and Tolstoy back to him with a wave of the hand, and talked to them in great perturbation and gloomily. The Vice-Chancellor was to explain to the Maréchal how greatly grieved his master was to feel that with all his resolute desire to join with France he could not succeed in doing so; that with all his heart he wished to be in a position to undertake to make a diversion in case of a necessary war against the Emperor, but that he could not undertake this without the King of Prussia, whose envoy, although furnished with powers, was not in possession of his master's authority with regard to the article relating to a military diversion, and that without the King of Prussia he, Peter, could not act and could make no positive promise in the matter.

The Regent had succeeded with his cunning manœuvre. Once again the Czar had been fooled, when he was in good faith and sincere; a rare circumstance, but one that had not brought him luck.

On June 14th, Peter went to the Sorbonne, where he embraced the statue of Richelieu without uttering a word. Bourcier who received him, having succeeded in fixing his attention upon books in Slavonic character, subtly suggested that the reunion of the Churches would be a crowning glory to His Majesty. He replied that he was nothing but a soldier. The other protested: he was also a hero and the protector of the orthodox faith. The flattery charmed him and he deigned to listen to the rest of the dissertation.

" Union," he remarked, " is difficult because of three points

on which there is disagreement: the Pope, the procession of the Holy-Ghost, and — the — the — "

" Unleavened bread and the Chalice," prompted Bourcier.

" On that," he said carelessly, " there would be no difficulty about agreeing."

The doctors who were thronging around were all acquiescence.

" Nor on the others either! " they exclaimed invitingly. " The differences relating to the Holy Ghost are nothing but a dispute over words, and the primacy of the Pope can very well be compatible with the system in operation in the Muscovite Church."

" Well then," decided the Czar, " make me a memorandum on the matter, and in haste, for I am leaving immediately. I promise you I will put it before my bishops and will see that they reply to you."

On June 15th, Peter dined at d'Antin's. In the banqueting hall was placed the Czarina's portrait under a canopy. How truly gallant these Frenchmen were! On the 16th, he went to see the tombs of the Kings at Saint-Denis. On his way back, at the Duc de Tresmes', at Saint-Ouen, he at last behaved politely to a lady: he invited the Marquise de Béthune, his host's daughter, to sit at his table. On the 17th, he went back to the Observatory to put some questions, and supped with the Maréchal de Villars. On the 18th, he got the idea of having an oculist at Saint Petersburg, as he had seen Verney operate on a cataract patient. An Englishman, Woolhouse, was presented to him, and he engaged him.

On the same day he took leave officially of the King of France and the Regent. He reminded Law in passing of a conversation they had had at the Palais-Royal. The financier had promised, not knowing how to get out of it, to go and make Muscovy wealthy when he had finished with France. Peter wanted this

man who turned gold into paper and paper into gold, just as he wanted everything. For naturally he had understood nothing at all of Law's system. But on his tablets he noted down: *John Law, banker, Place Vendôme.* He would not forget the address.

" You shall be a prince in my country, Prince of Astrakhan," he swore to the Scotsman.

On the 19th, Peter attended a session of the Parliament. The spectacle filled him with enthusiasm. Accompanied by Erskine, his doctor, he went later to the Académie française. No one had remembered to forewarn them, and there were only two in session, busy with their dictionary.

At the Académie des Sciences, the president of which was the Abbé Bignon, everybody on the contrary was present. They showed the Czar, to his admiration, M. La Faye's machine for raising water, M. Leméry's " arbre de Mars," M. Dalesse's jack, M. Camus' coach. Now these were interesting things, and these were serious. He put down on his tablets: *To found an Academy at Saint Petersburg.*

" At last! " cried the Regent on June 20th, seeing him depart to go and drink the waters at Spa. Before mounting into his carriage Peter was set upon a last conversation with the Duc d'Orléans on the subject of the treaty. They discussed it, alone together, retiring into the concierge's lodge while the shoes of the horses could be heard pawing the pavement in the courtyard.

The King had presented to the Czar four pieces of Gobelins tapestry. Peter had accepted these, but had declined a fine diamond-hilted sword: contrary to all expectations the Muscovite displayed real generosity. He gave his portrait to His Majesty, to the Duc d'Antin, to Tessé and to Verton, his *maître d'hôtel,* who had become his bosom friend. He left 60,000 livres for the servants who had looked after him, 3,000 for his guards,

30,000 to the workers in the factories he had visited. To these gifts there was added an ample distribution of gold and silver medals upon which were engraved the principal actions of his life and his battles. After all he had learned something of good manners in his contact with Paris. Gone were the days when, meaning to thank William III of England civilly for giving him so handsome a reception in London, he thrust at him an uncut diamond rolled up in a dirty screw of brown paper.

On the 20th, the Czar slept at Livry and on the 22nd he was at Rheims. He had no time to pay the cathedral a visit, but he demanded to be shown the Holy Ampulla and especially the shaking pillar in the Church of Saint Nicasius to amuse himself with the effect of the ringing of the bells on it. Shaffirov who went through the town five days later was more curious. He examined the Slavonic manuscript known as the *Texte de Saxe*.

At Charleville, where he embarked in a barge on the Meuse, Peter congratulated the notables on making such good beer. Nowhere had he drunk its equal.

But Namur was where he really had enormous delight. His counsellors told the inhabitants that not for ten years had they ever seen him in such good humour. The municipality offered him a treat in the shape of a sham battle on stilts, which is the great local diversion. And next day, which pleased him no less, he was present at the jousting on the Sambre. Gave fifty ducats to the stilt fighters and the same sum to the jousters. These people had really amused him enormously. He danced that night at the ball until eleven o'clock.

When he reached the Spa he insisted on being treated as an ordinary *bobelin,* which is the name given in that place to the drinkers of the waters. But at the same time, though unsuccessfully, he wanted to have his expenses defrayed.

Every morning he went to the Geronstère spring in a two-horsed carriage, driving it himself, and walking back. He had a tent put up and spent his days in it, in his shirt sleeves, without a cravat, a white cotton bonnet on his head, eating Limburger cheese or playing chess with his fool d'Acosta. Always agape over novelties, he bought an enormous quantity of trifling knick-knacks in the shops, which were only open during the season. A. M. Jean Lefranc having wished to be Consul of Muscovy, he gave consent, and decided to create consular posts everywhere. One day in his walks he caught sight of a curé cultivating his garden. He questioned him, took his name and his address and in accordance with his usual custom wrote them on his tablets. He would be very pleased if his lazy popes were to copy the example of this worthy man.

When his cure was at an end, Peter set off to join Catherine in Holland.

At Amsterdam in August the Czar obtained the famous convention he sought from His Most Christian Majesty, though without at first observing that it was a mere mockery as a diplomatic instrument. In exchange for the guarantee by Russia and Prussia of the Peace of Utrecht, France promised her mediation to bring about peace in the North, and her guarantee for the terms to be agreed upon. And it was provided for that subsequent negotiations should deal with the drawing up of a commercial treaty and a plan for a political alliance. But behind this pompous rigmarole there was nothing at all. The mediation was subject to the breaking of the existing conventions that bound France and Sweden, and the Regent had somehow managed to give nothing but a verbal undertaking not to renew these conventions.

No matter! Peter was satisfied. He was deluding himself, but he was not wrong. Little by little, people were beginning to be

interested in him; little by little he was worming his way into the European system.

His activities at Amsterdam were not solely confined to diplomacy. He began to dream, ever since his journey to Paris, of having a museum. With this design he acquired, in Amsterdam, a few pictures and a collection of land and water animals, and another of East Indian insects, made by an apothecary. He also arranged the purchase of the cabinet of specimens of Ruysch, his old master in surgery.

Fortified with the possession of a treaty, quantities of curiosities, and a new son, Peter Petrovitch, to whom his wife had given birth on September 8, the Czar proceeded to Berlin, where he found Frederick William and Goertz once more.

Catherine's débuts in a civilized court do not appear to have been very brilliant.

" You might take her, from her dreadful clothes," says someone, " to be a German play actress. Her gown must have been bought in an old clo' shop. It is very old-fashioned and heavily covered with silver embroidery and the dirt of age. The front of her skirt is adorned with jewels. The design is most peculiar, a double eagle the feathers of which are diamonds of the very smallest size and very badly set. She has a dozen orders and as many portraits of saints and relics stuck all along the facings of her dress so that when she walks she jingles like a mule. Four hundred so-called ladies are in her suite. Nearly all of these creatures carry a richly dressed baby on their arm. When you ask if it is theirs, they reply with low bows: " The Czar did me the honour to give me this baby."

The peasant disguised as Czarina, when she had practised it several times, managed to kiss the Queen's hand pretty well. But at table Peter was taken with convulsions. The Queen, alarmed because he was gesticulating and waving his knife

close to her, wanted to get up. To calm her he squeezed her wrists so hard that she cried out. That made him laugh. " Catherine's bones are not so flimsy! " he exclaimed.

Their Majesties were shown everything that was most noteworthy or remarkable in Berlin, among other things the cabinet of antiques. The Czar stopped in front of a pagan divinity in a most indecent posture.

" Kiss it," he ordered Catherine. She refused; he grew angry.

" I will have your head cut off if you do not obey."

The terrified wife did as she was told.

Peter, who was thinking of his own museum, would dearly like to carry off this curious object, and furthermore that cabinet all decorated with amber. Frederick-William dared not refuse, and gave way to his whims.

A conference was held with Goertz, in the course of which it was decided that the Muscovite, Prussian and Swedish plenipotentiaries should speedily meet in the island of Aland, with a view to concluding a separate peace. With these good words the Czar left Berlin.

On October 21, 1717, he reached Saint Petersburg to be greeted with sad news: the Prince-Pope Zotov was dead. Immediately he considered the election of his successor. He amended the regulations for the " council of high buffoonery," spreading himself in an obscene fashion about the verification of the candidate's sex.

He was in an excellent humour. Everything seemed to smile upon him. The Czarewitch, who was hiding in Naples, had at length been run to earth. The news had been brought to him at Spa by Rumiantsov. Promptly he had dispatched this officer back again to Vienna with Peter Tolstoy to procure from the Emperor the surrender of the culprit. With great impatience he waited for the couriers from Austria.

CHAPTER THREE

THE Ambassador Vesselovsky had definitely identified the pretended Kremenetzky who arrived in Vienna on November 9th, 1716. But he had not succeeded in discovering what Alexis had done the next day, when he left the *Black Eagle* inn with his mistress disguised as a man, nor how the pair had managed to get away from the capital. And, indeed, that he was never to know.

On November 10th, at ten o'clock at night, Count Schoenborn, the Chancellor of the Empire, was working in his study in his own home, when he was informed that an unknown person — this was Afrosinia's brother — was insisting on speaking to him at once. He replied by directing him to ask the person in question to come back next day. But the other insisted so strongly that he consented to receive him, against all etiquette, in his dressing-gown. At first he took his visitor for a madman.

" Monseigneur," cried the man, " the Czarewitch is below in the hall and wishes to see your Highness."

Stupefied, half believing it to be a dream, and vexed as well at not being in correct attire, the Chancellor asked to be allowed a few moments to spend in arranging his toilet. But already Alexis was coming in, exceedingly pale. The Prince walked up and down, despairing and in a state of tense excitement at the same time.

" I have come," he said, " to ask my brother-in-law the Emperor to give me his protection, to save my life. They mean to kill me, they mean to deprive us of the throne, me and my poor children. I have never failed in my duty to my father; I have always been obedient; never have I meddled with plots or intrigues. My wits have been weakened through the persecutions I have endured and because they have insisted on making me drink and all but killing me with fatigue. At first my father

was good to me, but since I had children all has gone for the worse, especially when a new Czarina came and since she had a son. It is she and Menshikov that have set my father against me. Both of them are rascals who know neither God nor conscience. My father says that I am useless either for war or for government, but I have always got sense enough to reign. They want to throw me into a monastery; I do not want to go into a monastery. The Emperor must save me. Take me to the Emperor."

He then fell into a chair, called for a glass of beer, and began to sob, while Schoenborn lectured him, consoled him and assured him that he would talk to his master next day.

Two days later, Charles VI, in great perplexity, fearing to offend the Czar and wishing to help his brother-in-law, had him taken to the Tyrol to the fortress of Ehrenberg, bidding the commandant treat his prisoner, who was accompanied by a page (this was Afrosinia) and servants, with all respect. Alexis arrived on December 7 in this gloomy refuge, with which he declared himself to be well satisfied.

On March 29, 1717, the indiscretion of a little clerk in the Chancery, who was in the pay of the Muscovite ambassador, was to put Vesselovsky on the track again. Rumiantsov searched the Tyrol and at the end of April he learned that a mysterious personage was hidden at Ehrenberg.

The Czar, immediately informed, sent Vesselovsky to Charles VI, who pretended ignorance and decided to transfer his brother-in-law into Italy.

The clerk betrayed his master again, and Rumiantsov, disguised as a Swedish officer, came up with Alexis at Mantua. Always spying on him, without showing himself, he followed him to Florence, to Rome, and entered Naples on his heels. Here they were on the outermost confines of the empire; the

fugitive could go no farther . . . luckily for the amateur policeman, who stupidly lost his way in the town and lost all trace of the Prince. The Czarewitch dined at the *trattoria* of the *Three Kings,* and the same day, May 9, in a hired coach and by devious ways came to the fortress of Saint Elmo.

Not until August were Tolstoy and Rumiantsov, come from Spa, to present to the Emperor a threatening letter from Peter demanding the surrender of the rebel. Charles said not a word. When the audience was ended Tolstoy betook himself to the Archduchess of Wolfenbüttel, Alexis' mother-in-law, and tried to work on her feelings about the fate of her grandchildren. They were in danger of becoming victims to the curse that would fall on their father if the heir did not submit. " I know my son-in-law's nature," she said, " the Czar is doing his utmost to constrain him to the pursuits of war, wholly in vain; he is better fitted to carry a rosary than a pistol in his hand." And she promised to interpose and support Peter's demands.

Meanwhile on August 18, the Emperor's ministers met in council and examined the situation. The Muscovite's letter had to be considered. He could, as a matter of fact, launch against their master the large armies he had in Poland, could throw himself against Silesia and Bohemia. They must therefore immediately apply themselves to reconciling the duties of hospitality and the honour of the Crown with the interests of the State.

The solution they adopted was clever and sufficiently mean. They would not officially sacrifice the Czarewitch, but they would slyly facilitate Tolstoy's mission.

On September 26, Alexis, trembling in every limb, was brought to the palace of the Viceroy of Naples, where he met his father's envoys, who handed him a letter from His Majesty dated at Spa. " If you submit," he wrote, " you may hope for

everything from me and I swear by divine justice that no punishment shall touch you; all my love shall be given to you if you obey me and return. But if you refuse, as your father and by the power I hold from Heaven I will curse you eternally; as sovereign I will declare you a traitor and will pursue you without mercy, I will punish your wickedness with the help of the God of justice."

The wretched man read this paper and answered that he would consider.

Tolstoy hastened to act. He had noted the strength of the young man's love for the Finnish girl. He prevailed upon the Viceroy to warn the heir that they would no doubt be obliged to separate him from his mistress. He himself announced to the Prince that his father was on the point of arriving in Italy. Once those two strokes went home, he never stopped a moment. He got Afrosinia into his game with promises of money. During this time a suborned clerk in the Naples government warned Alexis confidentially that the Emperor had resolved — he had seen the dispatch — to withdraw his protection from him.

On October 2, the miserable creature, at bay, begged for an interview with Tolstoy, after which he declared that he wished to go back to Muscovy freely and voluntarily. At the same time he laid down his conditions: the Czar must allow him to marry his mistress and give them leave to live away on one of his estates. The Ambassador pledged his master's word. And on October 14, they started on their journey.

During November, Peter wrote that he granted his son's requests. He only insisted that the marriage should not take place until after the Prince's return.

On December 4, in the middle of the night, the travellers arrived in Venice, with the exception of Afrosinia, who was

almost ready for her lying-in, and had been left at Venice where she had a most agreeable stay. The chief of the expedition, definitely afraid of a change of humour in Charles VI, who was rather ashamed of his behaviour, did not stop or break the journey, and pressed on towards Brünn. In this last town they had all but to draw swords against the emissaries of the Emperor, who declared himself shocked and offended at the extraordinary way they had gone through his capital; he had hoped that his brother-in-law would come to greet him. On the 19th, they reached Breslau, and on January 20th, Riga. On the 31st of the same month, Alexis came back to Moscow at daybreak, crossing himself before every church.

Peter lost no time. On February 3, he convoked in the Kremlin an assembly made up of prelates and high dignitaries of State. Three battalions of the Préobrajensky regiment, with loaded muskets, surrounded the Palace. The Czarewitch, who had been deprived of his sword, was brought in between two guards. The Czar had not yet seen his son. Directly he saw him he covered him with vituperation. The culprit fell on his knees, wept, implored forgiveness.

Peter would grant him pardon if he renounced the throne and indicated his accomplices. Alexis naturally agreed. He was taken off to the Cathedral of the Assumption, and there on the gospel he abdicated his rights and recognized his younger brother as the heir to the throne. That night the Czar published a manifesto announcing to his people the act that had been accomplished but without giving any justification for it. In this document, which is a long recital, almost naïvely set forth, of his paternal disappointments, he reproached the Czarewitch only with his crimes and his " worthlessness."

Now, tête-à-tête with Alexis, he demands the names of his accomplices, roaring with fury. The young man could give him

nothing but those of his confidential friends, for there had been no conspiracy in any real sense of the word.

The five heads of the charge retained by the council of ministers formed into a High Court proved as much. They were ridiculous: complicity in the flight of the Czarewitch, correspondence exchanged with him, desiring the death of the Czar, malevolent words spoken against the said Czar, omissions to denounce such words.

It was easy for Peter thus to implicate in the trial practically anyone. If he had been strictly logical, he ought even to have brought in everybody. The whole nation with almost complete unanimity hated Peter and loathed his reforms, which pleased only his personal friends, the adventuress in his entourage who had material interest in the success of his measures, and a very small number of superior minds, and these in any case away from the court.

Dositheus, the Bishop of Rostov, implicated because he had prophesied to the ex-Czarina the accession of Alexis, cried out in front of his peers: "Look at what you all have in the depth of your hearts; take your ears among the people and repeat what they will hear."

The Czar actually brought the innocent Eudoxia from her convent, and descending to the lowest degree of baseness made public a momentary amorous intrigue between the poor lady, unjustly cut off from the world, and an officer, Captain Glebov.

Peter had now got to the point where he treated as guilty not merely those who rebelled against his authority, but those who dared within their own bosoms not to approve of his hasty and incoherent measures. Would he end by killing all his subjects to force them to become civilized according to his ideas. Happily he never saw further than he actually saw with his eyes. And so he would be satisfied with executing those who to

his actual knowledge were opposed to his notions. Everyone must think exactly like him, even if he did not always know what he thought. And whoever will not copy him slavishly shall have his head cut off. That was his way of convincing. The more people he condemned, the more did he condemn himself. Reform was not, and never would be, anything more than a surface appearance. His subjects would submit to it, but would never assimilate it. He was so devoid of any sense of psychology that he did not observe that his people were quite indifferent to punishment. These men accepted death with an admirable resignation, which in any case was merely one of the forms of that very moral cowardice he had set himself to fight against. The accusation had no foundation; repression was doomed to be ineffective. Once again, he had found no solution for anything. But once more blood flowed.

Captain Glebov, terribly put to the question with the knout, with red-hot iron, with burning wedges, was nailed down for three days on a board bristling with wooden spikes. On March 4, he was impaled at the third hour, and died next day. On the 16th, the Bishop of Rostov was broken on the wheel and decapitated after the torture. His body was burned. Kikin was broken in the same way; he was tortured slowly, with intervals of rest so that his sufferings should be prolonged. Many were flogged with the knout and beaten with sticks; some had their noses slit and were sent into exile in Siberia. A lady of rank was given the knout, another, of the Golovin family, had to run the gauntlet. Princess Galitzin was taken to Préobrajensky and there in the torture-yard was stretched out on the ground before a hundred soldiers and beaten with rods. A four-square scaffold built of white stone, six cubits in height and surrounded with iron spikes on which heads were placed, was raised in the Red Square. On the top was a stone one cubit square on which were

heaped up the bodies of the executed; Glebov's was thrown on top of the pile.

Alexis, in accordance with his father's orders, was present at these various spectacles, which inspired him only with one thought: "When shall I be able to marry?"

On April 15, 1718, the bride arrived in Saint Petersburg. She was immediately taken to the fortress. There she was to be well treated. The Czar knew that Afrosinia was ready to sell her lover provided she was well paid.

Peter, always mistrustful, and suspecting his son of having perhaps forgotten a few persons capable of detesting him, had the Finnish girl brought in a covered-in boat to Peterhof, and questioned her there with the utmost suavity.

"Who used to write to the Czarewitch? Russians or foreigners? How many letters had he got in the Tyrol and at Naples? Did he tear them up? Of whom did he speak in terms of praise? On whom did he appear to base his hopes? Among the bishops who was the one he held in most esteem, and what did he say about him? When he went to see his mother what had he said?"

She revealed everything, and that was nothing. Alexis had evil thoughts, dark intentions, he had done nothing serious. And Peter seemed to realize as much. During the seven weeks following on this interview he manifested no hostility to his son. Then on June 14, he had him arrested. This time the wretched man was finally lost.

The Czar had cut down those who did not think as he did; he was resolved to spare no one; and so he would kill his own child. No new fact had emerged. The idea had simply developed inside his head. The enquiry conducted by Tolstoy merely repeated the previous trial. The questions put to the accused were pitiably trifling.

Had he uttered these words: "When I am master I shall abandon Saint Petersburg and live at Moscow; I shall destroy the fleet." What is the meaning of the phrase taken from a letter to a friend: "Presently, do not abandon me, presently." Why had he erased the word twice repeated? Was it true that he had approved these abominable words of one of his counsellors? "Life is not very easy for us, the Czar says to us: 'What are you doing indoors? I can't understand how anyone stays inside a house doing nothing.' He knows nothing of our needs. If he came to our homes he would see that one lacks wood, another something else; he would know what we have to do in the house."

Already stupefied, knouted unceasingly, tortured both physically and morally, the poor creature was driven to utter this confession: "I would have accepted the help of the Emperor to conquer the crown by armed force." Had the Emperor offered his support? Had Alexis asked him for it? He answered no.

What was preoccupying Peter was not to discover if his son was guilty. He meant to establish that guilt by some means or other, no matter what. For he desired first of all to free himself from the oath that bound him. Had he not promised the Czarewitch to pardon him if he would renounce and denounce his accomplices?

An assembly was convoked of one hundred and twenty-seven judges devoted to the sovereign. Peter at the same time launched a new manifesto. He had accorded a pardon in return for a sincere confession, and the confession had not been sincere; he declared that he was free to act and free to resume prosecutions. Against whom? Against Alexis alone.

For form's sake the Senate demanded a supplementary en-

quiry, and on June 24, the Czarewitch was condemned to death by an unanimous vote.

On the morning of the 26th, from eight till eleven, the Prince was given the knout again in the presence of His Majesty, Menshikov, Shaffirov and Buturlin. Now the prisoner, who had been continually beaten for a week, was worn out, sick, exhausted in every way. We can divine Peter as finding it embarrassing to carry out the sentence, and at the same time desirous of making an end.

All day long the messengers were going between the citadel of Saint Peter and Saint Paul and the Palace. What was the Czar expecting? A little before six, he got into a skiff to go to the fortress. At that moment, a last courier, the fifth since noon, brought him the good news: Alexis had just expired. The condemned man had officially succumbed to an apoplectic stroke on hearing his sentence read. Nobody believed it, and the most absurd rumours were circulated in the city.

De Bie, the envoy of the States-General, maintained that they had opened the prince's veins; Henry Bruce, a relative of the celebrated astronomer-artillery man, had seen an apothecary, very white of face, hastening to the prison with a phial of poison; Pleyer, the Emperor's ambassador, declared that the Czar had cut off the young man's head with his own hand. A girl called Krammer had sewn it on again the next night.

The Chancery drew up a memorandum intended for foreign courts, in which it was stated that His Majesty would have granted a pardon. " But it has pleased Almighty God, Whose holy judgments are ever just and right, in His divine goodness to deliver the person of the sovereign and his empire from all fear and danger."

Peter did not kill his son. He had him killed. By poison? The knout, savagely administered, was enough. When he left the

citadel at eleven in the morning on the day of the decease, he knew that death could not delay much longer. Hour by hour he was kept informed. He never had the least desire to show clemency. The diplomatic document lied on another detail. " Being revived " (after the pretended attack of apoplexy) " the Czarewitch asked to see his father, again confessed his misdemeanours in his presence, obtained his forgiveness, and breathed his last a few moments after." Now His Majesty had already learned of his victim's death before he reached the fortress.

The next day, June 27th, the murderer was at the mass and the *Te Deum* for the anniversary of the battle of Poltava. On the 29th, he appeared at the launch of a new ship. At the banquet he was very gay, laughed and drank heartily. Weber, the Hanoverian envoy, was amazed to see it.

The editor of the garrison journal, speaking of this feast, wrote: " Everyone enjoyed themselves greatly." And immediately after he narrates: " On June 30th His Majesty went to the Church of the Trinity at seven in the evening, where the funeral service for the Czarewitch A.P. was celebrated in the presence of all the clergy. At nine o'clock, the body was taken in procession to the citadel. Their Majesties, the Czar and the Czarina Catherine, all the ministers, senators and officers followed the body, which was borne by twenty-four gentlemen; the same evening it was interred in the cathedral together with the late Crown Princess in the porch near the door to the left hand."

In December, Peter had a medal struck on which there was a crown aloft in the air and lit up by the sun's rays piercing through the clouds. It bore the following inscription: *" The horizon has cleared."*

It was very soon to be darkened again. On December 10,

1718, Charles XII was killed at Frederikshall in Norway. A ball of half a pound in weight had struck him on the right temple and destroyed the left eye. Death was instantaneous. The heroic fighter had only time, with an instinctive movement, to drop his hand to his sword-hilt, and fell with his head thrown back against the parapet.

Ostermann and Bruce, who had been on the island of Aland since May discussing a peace, found nothing left for them to do but for one to fold up his red velvet dressing-gown and the other to pack away his silver plate among his baggage. The situation was entirely changed.

Ulrica-Eleanore took her brother's place on the throne and had Goertz executed. The Czar's great diplomatic combinations were crumbling.

Decidedly it was harder to make an end of a war than to put an end to a man.

CHAPTER FOUR

PETER condemned the Czarewitch and his friends to death simply because they were not of the same way of thinking as himself. And now he was in turn condemned to make public this impeccable thought after which everybody must rule his ways. It was to take more than two years for him to express his ideas in writing.

First of all the Czar tried to find a definite final solution for the religious question. Here he showed himself logical: the trial that set him in motion disclosed that the most intense opposition to reform came from the clergy.

By the end of 1718, Peter, rejecting Yavorsky, whom he had distrusted ever after his famous sermon, and who appears to have displayed some sympathy for Alexis, turned to Prokopovitch, the bishop of Pskov, the monk he had met after Poltava, the former Director of Education. This individual, who was conversant with everything in all the western theologies, appeared to him the best fitted to collaborate with him.

The *Code of Regulations* they drew up together reflects the opinions of the monarch on the subject with sufficient clearness.

Peter was not utterly impious. He sang in church; he went to Masses and *Te Deums;* he addressed a prayer to the Mother of God during a dangerous cruise; he asked to have the sacraments in a serious illness. But strictly utilitarian, he considered God only in the light of what might be obtained from him. The man called on the Lord in times of great distress; the sovereign had recourse to Him to strengthen his authority. Divine justice in his eyes played the part of a superior knout more effective than the earthly stick. His faith, as much as he had of it, was thus sufficiently ordinary, equally hostile to the highest forms of mysticism and to the lowest superstitions. He expected the popes to resemble him in this point and in others, too.

And so enthusiasts, subject to visions, apparitions, strange dreams, or the like, were to be severely kept out of holy orders. He promised himself also to have the miraculous places examined by a commission which should decide whether they were to be maintained or suppressed.

Peter had the sense of duty: candidates then must have their vocation; he imagined himself educated: they must go through the Episcopal Schools; he was thrifty: the fees should be cut down; he was a worker: every monk must have a useful trade or craft.

There was the foundation. The form of the *Code of Regulations* displayed the defects of the author, apter to destroy than to build up again, always much more aware of what he did not want than of what he wanted. The document was above all a virulent diatribe against the old clergy. The Czar cut off heads in order to convince; he insulted in order to amend. Prokopovitch, with innocent malice, had on his side cast into his theological sauce a great deal of salt. Some grains of it were even a trifle too big. Thus with powerful arguments he demonstrated the superiority of collective authority to personal power. Peter, being simple of mind, and never at home among abstract ideas, signed everything without noticing that no such indictment had ever before been laid against the individual will of the sovereign. The detail escaped him; he was only looking to the one end towards which this strange dissertation was directed: the Holy Synod.

By leaving the Patriarch's place vacant the Czar had rid himself of a troublesome contradictor, but he had deprived the Church of an indispensable head, and one he himself needed to fight against the *raskolniky*.

It was under the influence of this twofold intention that Prokopovitch, inspired by Presbyterian conceptions, invented

the Holy Synod. The Czar later peopled with docile creatures of his own this new institution that was substituted for both the Patriarch and the Council, and which in spite of its apparent independence, was yet kept under surveillance by an agent of the government.

The doctors of the Sorbonne, who had sent to Spa the memoranda promised to His Majesty had shed their ink to no purpose. The union of the Churches appeared impossible henceforth. The sovereign, jealous of his prerogatives, had perhaps gained by this, in avoiding the Pope's intervention in ecclesiastical affairs. The reformer as certainly lost. For egoistical and mean reasons, once more contradicting himself, he had shut up within the very circumscribed limits of a State religion the Russian soul he desired to liberate in other directions, constraining it to turn it upon itself, keeping it at a distance from the great centre of civilization represented by Rome and thus depriving it of the one link that could bind it solidly to Europe.

The publication of the *Regulations* on January 25, 1721, and the inauguration on February 11, of the future Holy Synod, originally called the Ecclesiastical College, provoked universal wrath. The Czar cared not at all. What suited him must suit everybody.

Peter had decided, dealing very handsomely with God, that this college should possess the same powers in the religious sphere as the Senate in civil affairs. At once it became urgent to settle the ill-defined jurisdiction of that body. It had been intended originally to take the place of the sovereign in his absence, and it continued to function while he was in residence in the capital; it was entrusted with the administration of the Colleges, and the Colleges existed only on paper, with the exception of three or four, which to simplify matters, were withdrawn from its jurisdiction.

The Czar first of all created the necessary liaison official between the Senate, the Crown, and the administrative departments, imitating in this, and of course, topsy-turvily, Sweden and the Parliament of Paris. This post of *procureur général* called for a man above all suspicion. It was held by His Majesty's one-time favourite, Yagujinski, a notorious rogue, who divided his time between stealing himself and vigourous indictments of the peculations of others. Parallel with this the constitution of the Colleges was taken vigorously in hand.

Peter drew up the Admiralty *Regulation* with his own hand. He worked on it, from January to December 1721, four days a week at the rate of fourteen hours a day. The navy, which the enemies of reform later boasted of wishing to destroy, was in his eyes clearly the keystone of the whole edifice of society. Once this monumental task was completed, he decreed that the regulations for the various colleges should be copied from it. He bravely put forward the enormity "Nothing shall be changed except the names where necessary." [Collection of the Laws of Russia, No. 4008.] Only one idiot obeyed this cryptic order, the President of the College of Inherited Property. The others had their own regulations already, a circumstance of which His Majesty was, of course, ignorant.

With the idea of reforming the administration of justice Peter was continually inveighing against his judges, who were, as a matter of fact, every one of them rascals. He denounced the evil very wisely; he was very severe on their immorality. But he did not see that his legislation, which was cobbled up from day to day, and nothing but the reflection of his successive ideas and caprice, rested on no moral foundations. The subject not merely must do that which was just, in accordance with a well-established law, he had perpetually to adapt his conduct to the changeable will of the sovereign.

At the same time, the man had a sense of law; in the actions he maintained against individuals, he allowed himself to be condemned by the Senate without wincing. Peter naïvely calculated that it was always enough to set an example, revealing at one and the same time his undeniable desire to behave well and the poverty of his mind when he applied himself to delicate questions.

Everyone then must think exactly as he did. Presently everyone must speak as he spoke. He had recently given orders to translate the works of Puffendorf, and as usual, it had not been done. He insisted, and in 1721, charged the Holy Synod with the work. That assembly declared itself in a difficulty: should the old Church Slavonic be used or the current speech? Neither the one nor the other, the Czar replied. He meant them to employ the incongruous jargon full of foreign words, whose meaning he deformed or whose spelling he changed, in which he was accustomed to express himself.

He was to go much further still. He had already laid down to his subjects the way they were to mend their shoes. He assembled them in the harvest fields to demonstrate to them, wielding the scythe himself, how they were to cut their corn. He showed them how they were to behave at mass. And lastly, something unique in the world's annals, he showed them how they were to enjoy themselves.

Peter ordered that three times a week, in a certain number of houses, there should be receptions to which he gave the French name of *assemblées*. In this he was aiming at copying the *salons* of the Regency.

A series of ukases regulated all the details of these parties. They were to begin between four and five and end at ten. The host at whose home the rendezvous was fixed was to make it public by a notice over his doorway. He was to put at the service

of his guests four rooms reserved respectively for dancers, smokers, ladies who might like to amuse themselves at blind-man's-buff, and for the lackeys. The host would provide candles, refreshments and all requisites for games. As His Majesty cared only for chess, cards and dice were forbidden under penalty of the knout. The duty of sending out invitations was in the hands of the lieutenant of police. This last post had been created by the arch-imitator since his return from Paris, and its holder was the Portuguese Jew Devier.

The *assemblées* had to be attended by officers, officials, the staffs of the Chancery, naval constructors, foreigners, and the wives of all these. Children over ten were also admitted.

The object of these *assemblées,* as Peter laid it down in express terms, was to give each person an opportunity to enjoy himself or herself, to hear the news, to converse about the affairs of the day, and to dance. He did not forget to add that a certain correctness of dress was *de rigueur*. And again he forbade the master of the house to go forward to meet anyone, whoever it might be. The guests, on their side, were to be absolutely free to behave as they pleased. All that was asked of them was to salute their host on their arrival and at their departure.

An individual provided with a large nosegay gave the signal for the ball, while the orchestra, made up of wind instruments, began its din.

Dancing, the Czar pointed out, was intended to bring the two sexes together. He permitted the mothers who were not indulging in this pleasure to sit along the wall and knit. Any young men who on leaving the ladies did not make three bows were fined. They were condemned to drink at a single draught an enormous glass of vodka known as the *Great Eagle*.

Peter was the great master of ceremonies at these distin-

guished merrymakings. He would place infirm old men in the ranks of the dancers, and order everybody to copy his steps. The men showed themselves cleverer than the ladies in their paniered dresses, pinched in their corsets and tortured by their shoes. They made mistakes, complained. His Majesty, undaunted, never tired and ordered them to start the minuet again. It vexed him to see them so stiff and silent. To shake them up a little he invented a dance in which each gentleman kissed his partner on the mouth. At the end of the ball, the Czar would clap his hands to impose silence, and announce the date and the place for the next *assemblée.*

The professor of fine manners worked very hard, wore out the soles of his shoes, sweated terribly, to which he was by nature prone, but had no success.

For Peter, once again, had little appreciation of his true rôle as a sovereign. When you desire to introduce court manners into your capital, you must first of all have a court. Now he had no court and had no wish to have one. He had six horses in his stables, no more and no less, two carrioles and a sledge in his coach-houses. On gala days he was forced to borrow from Menshikov some of the governor's richly gilded coaches.

His wardrobe was no better stocked. It contained only three laced coats, which from motives of economy he seldom wore. He was still less often seen with a peruke. At church if he felt his head cold he would seize one from a neighbour and clap it on himself. He played this trick on the burgomaster of Danzig, who nearly caught his death of cold.

Meals at the Palace were never laid for more than sixteen persons. Guests sat down at random. As soon as all the places were filled, he used to dismiss those who were left out with the words: " Gentlemen, go home and give your wives a treat." He could not endure a lackey near him. Felton brought all the

dishes at the same time, placed a bottle in front of each guest, and disappeared. The aides-de-camp served quite simply. He ate quickly, sometimes with his fingers, always repeating that to stay long at table was a come-down for a highborn gentleman.

Peter was dressed like and looked like a small tradesman, and had the tastes and manners of a workman. He enjoyed himself only in very humble company. At Moscow he used to dine with the wife of the post-master Fademrecht, who had once been his mistress. He frequented the houses of the apothecary Gregori, the physician Bridlau, and several merchants, all old friends of his. He used to dance at the house of a lady called Ammon. At Saint Petersburg he gossipped in the shops, drank in the sailors' boozing-kens, sang *Slavlénie* in the streets, pulled out servant-maids' teeth, helped at fires, and received ambassadors in the celebrated inn of the *Four-Frigates*. At the marriage of one of the Golovins, he carried out the duties of maître-d'hôtel, eating at the buffet, holding out at arm's length the mace of his temporary office at dessert to show his strength and giving himself up to stable-boy jokes in the nuptial chamber.

He always remained the carpenter of Zaandam, the one-time guest of the adventurers of the *Sloboda*. He retained unchanged the habits of his youth, his sick man's whims, and his barbarian native cruelty.

Romodanovsky being dead, he appointed his son Ivan "King" in his stead, and called him "His Caesarian Majesty" like the father. The accession of the new burlesque sovereign gave an opportunity for a solemn entry into Moscow, in which the troops of the garrison took part.

The election of Zotov's successor assumed the character of a national event. In the meeting of the conclave, Peter took the

part of First Deacon. The Princess-Abbess distributed the voting papers, represented by eggs, to the cardinals, who kissed her breasts according to the *Regulations* of which the Czar was the author. At the banquet the new Prince-Pope, Peter Ivanovitch Buturlin, a relative of the general, vomited from his lofty throne upon the guests. The sight of the sullied perukes delighted His Majesty.

In 1720, the Czar was taken with the idea of marrying this same Buturlin to Zotov's widow, then seventy years of age. He had glasses of obscene shape specially made for the wedding feast, and assigned to the bride and bridegroom for nuptial chamber the interior of a pyramid erected in memory of a victory over the Swedes. Windows were made in the sides of the monument for the delectation of the populace.

After this filthy profanation it is by no means surprising that the Czar should in the previous year have ordered the body of the gallant Sheremetev, who died on February 17, 1719, to be brought to Saint Petersburg, in disregard of the definitely expressed wishes of the hero to be interred at Kiev. He accused him of slighting his new capital.

A month later, one of the sovereign's mistresses, Mary Hamilton, a grand-daughter of Artamon Matveiev, was condemned to be executed for infanticide and for having poked fun at Cathrine's high colour. Peter made the young woman wear a white silk dress trimmed with black ribbons, kissed her in most theatrical fashion in the middle of the Square, was present at the execution; when it was over he picked up the head and gave a lecture on anatomy to the crowd, indicating the names of the various muscles and veins in the neck. Finally he kissed the blue lips, tossed the bleeding head aside, made the sign of the cross and took himself off. And at night he went back to give his dancing lessons.

These half insane tricks of utter bravado fit in very well in Peter with a great deal of fundamental naïveté.

When the Académie des Sciences in Paris received him to its bosom, he by no means took this flattering election lightly.

Exceedingly eager after titles and diplomas, which is of course the sign of mind attached to appearances above everything, he no doubt was delighted to read in the volume the society sent him with great regularity these two lines, very intoxicating to his vanity:

MEMBRE HONORAIRE:
SA MAJESTÉ TSARIENNE

But being above all things a man of duty, he also intends to fulfil his functions as an academician. It has no terrors for him to add this new trade to those of carpenter, shoemaker, and turner. And first of all he sends his confrères a marine chart, with promises to do better.

And in very deed he will very soon flood his provinces with geometricians furnished with these brief instructions: "To determine in each town the latitude by means of the quadrant, and thereafter to go in a straight line in every direction of the compass to the borders of each district." Filled with zeal he gave orders to ransack the correspondence of Leibnitz to get from it ideas for researches that might be undertaken. One proposal of the illustrious savant roused his enthusiasm beyond everything else. He wished to know his position with regard to America, if it was joined with Tartary or if the sea gave means of communication with that continent. His explorers were not destined to go beyond the Kurile Islands, but they brought back a map of them. Meanwhile he had dispatched to the Abbé Bignon a very curious manuscript on vellum, the letters of which

were painted in gold, and which had been found in Siberia under the ruins of an old church. " In what language," he enquired, " is this document written? " Fourmont, a specialist in these matters, did not hesitate to declare that this unknown idiom, which was in reality simply Manchu, was the very speech the Tungus used in old times.

Peter was never to know that he had been misinformed. We may believe that even if he had known he would not have died of despair. At bottom the progress of philological science, or any others, was a matter of complete indifference to him. All he cared about was to look like a real academician in the eyes of his Paris colleagues.

Once again the man commands the sovereign and only acts under the urge of circumstances and for strictly personal reasons.

He would never have signed the ukase proclaiming the excellence of the springs of Olonetz, which had recently been discovered, if he had not himself in former days been obliged to drink the waters at Carlsbad, at Pyrmont, and at Spa. He protected and fostered trade, but he never built a road because he himself preferred to travel by boat.

Sometimes the monarch, too anxious to copy the princes of the West, thwarted the tastes of the boor, but the other speedily had his revenge.

Thanks to Leblond, the Czar had at Peterhof a château and gardens that were a magnificent copy of Versailles with an extraordinary abundance of water. He lived in a hut close by.

He treated himself to a library, and a librarian, but he never opened a book.

He had set up a picture gallery, since that was the custom in Europe. But alongside his Rembrandts, his Van Dycks, his Breu-

ghels, his Mierises, his Van Ostades, he exhibited living freaks: goitre subjects, hunchbacks, deformed children, calves with two heads and six-legged sheep.

In a most illuminating ukase he calls for all monsters to be delivered to him. He would allow ten roubles reward for human beings, six for animals, three for birds. But no reward, unless blows of the stick in case of disobedience, was offered to those who brought him, in accordance with the clauses inserted after, bones, weapons and old pottery found in the earth or under water.

He had a museum: people must go to it. To attract reluctant visitors he announced that free refreshments would be distributed.

The Academician, the enlightened protector of the arts and sciences, could not forget that he had once upon a time received lessons from a tooth-puller in the Amsterdam fair.

Into a serious diplomatic document addressed to Yagujinsky, who was in Vienna on a mission, he slipped a few lines to ask his friend to look for a pig-faced woman whose portrait Peter Tolstoy had sent him. Where was she? Could she not be seen? And then he took up his serious theme again.

For in the course of those terrible days that extended from December 1718 to the end of the summer of 1721, the Czar was not satisfied with finding a final solution for the religious question, with drawing up the Regulation for the Navy and the Regulation for the "Council of High Buffoonery," with reorganizing the Senate and teaching the ladies the minuet, with fulminating against the immoral conduct of the judges and marrying Zotov's successor, with devouring Leibnitz' correspondence and buying ducks with two bills, with forming Administrative Colleges and founding a watering place, he must

needs, always in bitter straits, continually be reshaping his finances, making war, discussing peace.

In the midst of his perpetual labours, his terrible troubles, his disgusting amusements, his supererogatory preoccupations of a serious dancer and a frivolous savant, one last blow fell upon him. The one male child left to him, Peter Petrovitch, died suddenly. He no longer had an heir. As on every occasion when misfortune overtook him, his first thought was flight, he seized a pistol and laid it to his temple; then flung it away. Hide the yawning gulf of the future from him; let no one speak to him of the succession until further orders. He recovered himself. The *doubina* twirled in the air, his face made grimaces, his legs twitched: he was still alive.

His uneasy ear was turned towards Europe; his haggard eyes looked across the Baltic; the trembling hand dipped into empty coffers.

First of all, money. He finds it by a kind of audacious stroke due to chance, once more, though almost unconsciously, copying the Swedes. And this is one of the major reforms of his reign. He substitutes a poll-tax for the land tax. He had read no treatise on *political arithmetic* before making his decisions; he had seen the people, at the time of the census, deceiving his agents by assembling in a single cottage. They were making game of him, he will make game of them. Instead of taxing by households he will tax *souls*. And he will make the estate owners' tax responsible for it. But the owners would only consent to pay for the peasants they were certain could not get away from them. So there against his will he was obliged to buttress up slavery. The reform ended in general serfdom. When Law comes, he thought, perhaps things will be put right. He sent Mussin-Pushkin to Paris; when the unhappy financier was in flight from France he set Monsieur Baguenier

de Pressy on his heels. The Scotsman politely gave him the slip. He wrote to him in Venice, and was anxiously awaiting his reply.

The war was turning to stalemate. Peter boldly transported an army corps to Sweden under the protection of the fleet, which now at last was of some use. The Muscovites ravaged the coasts, burned a hundred villages or so, and detachments of Cossacks were seen a mile from Stockholm. That courageous land, which gave birth to Charles XII, and all but died for it, pulled herself together, and the negotiations began, languishing in an atmosphere unfavourable to Peter.

His former allies and friends were hostile to him. Vienna, jealous of Berlin, turned haughtily away from Saint Petersburg ever since the trial of Alexis. The Czar could not punish the Emperor; he took it out of the Jesuits. Turn the sons of Loyola out; let them be taken back to the frontiers; let them make their way across his States no more.

Queen Ulrica Eleanore, less brutal, had in return for ceding Bremen and Werden to Hanover secured the support of the Elector-King of England. George brought Stockholm and Denmark into agreement and sent Admiral Norris to threaten Reval. The Czar, more and more furious and exasperated, drove the English merchants out of Muscovy.

He had committed a few diplomatic blunders in twenty years. And the list was not finished. With his eternal mania for meddling in other people's affairs, he sent for Charles-Frederick, the Duke of Holstein, who had rights on the crown of Sweden. He offered him the hand of his daughter Anne; he proclaimed himself the champion of his cause. The prince hastened to come, enchanted at the prospect of being kept.

Meanwhile Campredon, the envoy of the King of France, drowning his horses, losing his baggage, and ruining his

clothes, had at last arrived in this impossible capital, served by no roads that were not thick with mire. This hardy traveller proposed to the Czar to go and pave the way at Stockholm for a new conference. Peter greeted him cordially and approved. He refrained from pulling off his wig, from drumming on his back with his *doubina,* from kissing him on the forehead and from bewildering him with insipid talk, all of which made up his usual way of treating ambassadors.

Campredon was successful and Nystadt was fixed upon for the meeting of the plenipotentiaries.

In April 1721, Bruce packed up his plate again, Ostermann his dirty dressing-gown, and both of them, cunning and eager, once more crossed the Baltic. The destiny of Muscovy lay in the hands of this Scot and this Westphalian.

Weeks rolled by, disappointing and empty, under the sky of Saint Petersburg, first bathed in sunshine, then less blue, then nearly grey. Snow was felt to be at hand.

The Czar had never been particularly agreeable of intercourse, but now he became simply insupportable; he was all uneasy movements and moods; he was possessed by perpetual tantrums; his natural functions were broken into by an insomnia that allowed him no rest. He never stopped grimacing, shaking his head, bellowing. At night he saw ghosts, and blood running as water runs over walls in the washing.

At first he would surrender nothing but Finland; he threw over the Duke of Holstein; he was ready to sacrifice Livonia. Why were Bruce and Ostermann so stubborn over letting it go? Was he the master or was he not? He wanted peace, did they hear that? Peace.

It was not his mouth that cried so loud, it was his soul, his whole flesh and bone.

CHAPTER FIVE

ON SEPTEMBER 3, 1721, the streets of Saint Petersburg suddenly filled with people. The bourgeois left their houses and the traders quitted their shops. Far away on the Neva they heard salvoes of guns and flourishes of trumpets.

Everyone knew that His Majesty had gone in his yacht to Viborg, to meet the courier from Nystadt. With an instinctive impulse the crowd turned to the Troïtsa quay, which was soon black with people.

The ship loomed larger and larger. All could recognize the tall silhouette of the Czar standing on the prow and waving a handkerchief. What was he calling? Every ear was strained.

" Peace! Peace! " shouted Peter.

Tears of joy shone in his eyes. The people, at last delivered from that nightmare that had gone on for twenty years, cheered him to the skies.

He disembarked, light and active, repeating " Peace! Peace! " He hurried with long strides to the cathedral. The bells were pealing already, and a solemn thanksgiving was quickly held.

All round the building the crowd grew, pushed, jostled this way and that. Peter appeared anew. His voice took a graver note: " God has sent us peace with the Swedes," he announced once more.

Barrels of beer, of wine, of vodka were rolled up. Always the same, he leaped on a table, glass in hand.

" I drink to your orthodox healths! "

The wind whistled above perukes, three-corned hats, caps, and a few ancient bonnets. He made a speech. They listened carelessly but applauded enormously.

Peter came down from his platform. He laughed, he wept, he danced about for joy. He was not forty-nine today, he was

twenty, he was fifteen. Happiness made his thin face radiant, a little red coloured his sallow brown cheek; the air stirred the curls of his chestnut hair that time had darkened.

He had good reason to rejoice. As once before Shaffirov had done on the banks of the Pruth, so Bruce and Osterman had obtained for him a better peace than the one he had desired. He was to keep Ingria, Esthonia, Livonia, a part of Karelia, and even a part of Finland. England and Poland were included in the treaty also; the only one forgotten was the Duke of Holstein. Sweden had ceased to be a great power; the old Muscovy was dead; Russia was born, Europe counted one nation more. Peter had every right to be proud of his work. He had never wished for so much since the day when he had that chance meeting with Augustus on the road to Cracow. He would easily be convinced that he had settled beforehand the goals to which his blind but admirable tenacity had led him.

By way of reward for this huge victory, the Chancellor Golofkin, in the name of the unanimous Senate, Admiral Apraxin, in the name of the naval officers, Prince Menshikov as President of the College of War, solemnly conferred upon him the titles of Emperor, Father of his Country, Peter the Great, and the grades of Admiral and Field-Marshal. He accepted all these honours, with no overweening pride. But he refused to be called Emperor of the East; he would only be Emperor of All the Russias.

On October 22nd, a banquet was held for a thousand guests in the palace of the Senate. Before the end of the feast Peter rose, announced that he was going to rest for some hours on his yacht, and forbade anyone to leave the banqueting hall till he returned. To make sure that he would be obeyed, he had the doors shut and locked. He let off the fireworks himself, as the man who had been put in charge of them had been found dead-

drunk. So, too, were most of the guests as well. Menshikov rolled under the table, and Apraxin never stopped wiping the big drunken tears from his eyes with the corner of his napkin. Suddenly he burst into sobs.

The Emperor, who was in better condition because he had a harder head for drinking, teased his wife, always full of jest.

"By the terms of the treaty I am to return all prisoners to Sweden; I don't know what will become of you.

The one time Livonian servant took the joke gaily. She thought herself secure for the future. And in fact, on December 23rd, she was proclaimed Empress by a double vote of the Senate and the Holy Synod. This last assembly was docile in a different way from the Adrians and the Yavorskys.

There were some persons who were speedily to be less reassured about her destiny than Catherine was herself. Peter did not succeed in settling the question of the succession, which since the end of the war had passed into the forefront of his preoccupations.

Tolstoy dissuaded him from leaving the throne to the son of Alexis, for he feared lest the youth might make him pay dear for the insults his father had suffered from the diplomat. Shaffirov and Ostermann advised their master to choose his eldest daughter Elizabeth as his heir. The Emperor seemed at first to consent to this, and contemplated marrying her to Alexander Narishkin, to-day a Rear-Admiral, and one of his companions on the great journey to Zaandam. *He* would never allow the navy to be destroyed. Almost at the same time he proposed to the Regent to give the Grand Duchess Elizabeth's hand to the Duc de Chartres, whom he might, so he declared, make King of Poland. Finally he did nothing definite. He contented himself with signing an ukase, in the beginning of February, which recognized the right of the reigning sovereign

to appoint his successor. And that was all. Was he waiting, before he made up his mind, until his mistress Maria Cantemir, the daughter of the Hospodar of Moldavia, who still vegetated at Saint Petersburg in a magnificent palace among his books, should have been brought to bed? The lady was with child by him. Rumours flew busily around. It was said that if she gave him a son he would repudiate Catherine and marry her rival. He was perhaps thinking of it. But above everything at that moment he was thinking of the great masquerade with which he intended to celebrate in Moscow the Peace of Nystadt. Never, he swore, would anything like it have been seen before in his States. This time he was not lying.

At the head of the procession there advanced a Marshal-Jester surrounded by masks, then the Prince-Pope Buturlin sitting upon a throne in a great sledge, and clad in a mantle lined with ermine. At his feet a Bacchus raised a cup and all the mock cardinals of the Council escorted him.

The Emperor's jester displayed himself behind in a sledge drawn by four little pigs. In another, shaped like a shell and adorned with two marine monsters made of pasteboard, was an actor made up like Neptune, with an enormous white beard. The populace were invited to hang gold ducats to this false beard, which at the end of the pageant Peter cut off himself, not forgetting to slip the coins into his pocket.

The Princess-Abbess, surrounded by a band of mock monks, was in a gondola fixed on the axle-tree of a sledge, like the great ship's boat decorated with a statute of Fortune, in which Prince Menshikov and his suite, disguised as abbés, were seated. Princess Menshikov, his sister, and various ladies in Spanish costume, were in a bark. " King " Ivan Rodomanovsky was in a white skiff full of stuffed white bears. The Dowager Czarina Prascovia, in old Muscovite costume, and her daughter

in shepherdess dress, were in a closed gondola. Admiral Apraxin and his suite, disguised as burgomasters of Hanover, figured in a galley with its sails spread.

Behind a pinnace in which naval officers dressed as seamen were heaving the lead into the snow appeared the main attraction of the show: a three-masted ship mounted with real guns and displaying all the working details of an actual ship. Fifteen horses dragged it along, and the Emperor was in command on board, carrying out all ship's exercises with nine men in the midst of his generals beating the drum. Peter climbed up the mast, as active as a monkey. His acrobatic feats set the crowd agape.

In a magnificent gondola, all upholstered in red velvet and warmed by a stove, sat the Empress. A coachman and postillions in seamen's clothes but with plumed hats drove the eight horses yoked to it. In front of the boat were seen two servants painted to look like negroes. Catherine changed her dress at intervals, now appearing as a Dutchwoman, now in red velvet, now in blue, but always with the ribbon of her order crosswise on her breast, a diamond sword at her side and a pike in her hand.

The members of the "Council of High Buffoonery" disguised as harlequins went before a great sledge in the shape of a dragon, with seats arranged in a semicircle, each of which carried a tiny sledge upholstered with linen with a masked lady sitting in it.

Six bears dragged another sledge, the coachman of which was clad in a bearskin, and ten dogs another very long sledge followed by those of the Duke of Holstein and the foreign envoys in silk dominoes.

In a Turkish ship armed with five cannon, which replied to every discharge from His Majesty's man-of-war, lolled Cante-

mir, the former Hospodar of Moldavia, on a prodigious pile of cushions under a white canopy.

The procession came to an end with a great sledge shaped like a sausage, and containing the servants of the Prince-Pope in red caftans and pointed hats.

For five days, interrupted only by a great dinner at the house of the wealthy Strogonov, a famous gastronome, this inconceivable official pageant rolled its way through every street in Moscow. Its sole effect was to lead the people to believe that victory had been won through the fleet. The sovereign was deluding himself, for it was the army that had done it all. The man was right. Without his immoderate passion for ships he would never have founded Russia. It is curious to note that he was always at the same time logical and absurd, as half-insane persons and maniacs often are.

Now that he had signed a peace with the Swedes, he wished to sign it symbolically with his soul. The idea that came into his mind was truly that of a supersensitive visualist. He would burn down his little house at Préobrajensky. Was it not there that one night long ago, between the envoys of Augustus and the King of Denmark, he had resolved to attack Charles? A resolution that had cost him twenty years of terrible distress and anxiety. He would fain blot out their very memory. So put Roman candles in the mouldering beams; adorn the roof with coloured fireworks; set fire to the whole thing. He watched his past blazing to annihilation and beat the drum the while.

It is finished! The sick man breathes more freely. He feels relieved, rejuvenated, indeed happy. He is ready to begin anew. He will begin again without heed to the fatigue of others, since he himself has the illusion of being fatigued no longer. He makes ready to turn against Persia. In any case circumstances are compelling him to do so.

In spite of all his praiseworthy efforts he had failed to get hold of the Pekin market; he was about to try to open up a way for his caravans to get to India through the territories of the Shah. Volynski, the Governor of Astrakhan had conceived the project and was urging him to act quickly. The Russian factories in Persia had been devastated by the incursions of the Lesghians and the Kazykoumiks; the Afghans had reached Ispahan; and the Porte was beginning to contemplate restoring order in the country.

Peter hesitated no longer. He would forestall his eternal enemies the Turks.

In May 1722, accompanied by Catherine, by Maria Cantemir, who was pregnant, by the former Hospodar who was to act as interpreter and draw up his proclamations, by Tolstoy and Admiral Apraxin, the Emperor left Moscow at the head of some thirty thousand soldiers, horse and foot, who would be joined on the way by the Cossacks, the Kalmucks, and the Tartars.

Naturally he travelled by water. On Lake Pereïslavl, which he had not seen for thirty years, a sad sight awaited him. The poor fleet he had built here in his youth was lying in utter decay. He lost his temper and stormed. Who were the criminals that had left those precious relics to perish? Let whatever could be saved be saved.

In the next year he organized round "the Ancestor," the English boat of his boyhood, a great fête commemorating the creation of the navy.

At this fête, helped by excitement and by wine, he displayed the greatest affection for his future son-in-law, the Duke of Holstein. He kissed him on the neck, on the forehead, took off his peruke and kissed his head, and lastly "between the teeth and the lips."

But for the moment he is more sensible. He condescends to

listen to the advice of his doctors. He will drink nothing or hardly anything during the whole of this campaign in Persia.

On account of the heat he had his head cropped close, telling the barber to keep the curls carefully to make a peruke for him on his return. Catherine copied him. He spent his days in a bombazine jacket and a white cotton bonnet. He put on uniform only to receive deputations, the mountain chiefs or his ally the Ayuta-Khan, King of the Kalmucks.

This handsome old man of seventy pleased him greatly. The Empress also welcomed very cordially the Prince's wife and daughter with their jet-black plaited hair, who were clad in handsome robes of Persian brocade with little round bonnets edged with sable.

On July 18th, Peter, his suite, and a part of his army embarked on the Caspian at Astrakhan, where they left pretty Maria Cantemir who had been taken with her pains. Catherine and Tolstoy, as they watched her departing, exchanged a curious smile.

At the end of August, the Emperor arrived at the Russo-Persian frontier and fixed his camp among the bitumen wells in front of Derbent.

" Alexander built this city, Peter takes it," declared the conqueror, who after making his triumphal entry went off and took up his quarters among the vineyards.

That historic phrase was whispered in his ear by the learned Cantemir, who already saw his future son-in-law annexing Persia to his empire.

The sovereign grimaced and grumbled:

" You do not see into my intentions," he said, " and don't perceive my best interests. I am not aiming at acquiring new territories. Perhaps I have even more than enough already. All I am looking for is water. Water! Water! "

He found defeat first of all. A storm sank the ill-found ships that carried the stores; his army was on the point of dying of hunger; soon he had no horses left. He left a garrison in Derbent and went away in pitiful case, disillusioned. But he stuck grimly to it; he adopted a new system; and never ceasing to harry the enemy with small very mobile detachments, thanks to his stubbornness favoured as usual by luck and chance, he ended in the following year by getting from the Shah the surrender of the whole Caspian coast, including Baku, in exchange for a vague promise of illusory assistance against the rebel tribes. A somewhat muddled treaty, signed with the Porte a few months later, recognized his possession of these conquests.

And now for the melancholy trip back to Moscow. His Majesty was suffering from retention of urine. Let that donkey Blumentrost, his chief doctor, cure him of it at once! And he showed him his *doubina*. He was enraged to hear on reaching Astrakhan that Maria had had a miscarriage. He had well said: doctors are donkeys. Catherine and Tolstoy secretly thought they might sometimes be useful helpers. The former Hospodar mournfully saw his great hopes vanish into thin air.

Another who cursed that fatal campaign in Persia was Shaffirov. Three rogues, free to act in the master's absence, had determined to destroy the fourth rogue. Menshikov would rather steal himself than watch the Vice-Chancellor stealing; Ostermann had a covetous eye on his place; Golofkin trembled for his own. At last Shaffirov was in prison, and on February 15, 1723, he laid his head on the block.

Would His Majesty allow them to execute that "dirty Hebrew spawn" who had, all the same, concluded the peace of the Pruth? The executioner's assistants were actually hauling at the feet of the fat fellow whose huge belly was giving trouble, when one of Peter's servants brought a letter of mercy which

commuted the penalty into perpetual exile. Pale and shivering, Shaffirov went in haste to have it ratified in the Senate. All the members of the assembly shook him by the hand and congratulated him warmly on the fortunate end of the wretched prosecution. A few hours earlier they had condemned him to death by a unanimous vote.

Easy to understand that the Emperor wished to reform the administration of justice. He issued three violent decrees against the venality of the judges and ordered them to be put up in all the courts. And there they remained for two hundred years. In all good faith he believed he had settled the whole matter.

He went on making laws and issuing quantities of ukases. He founded a city and a needle factory at the same time. He altered his customs tariffs in a liberal spirit and laid down that the *raskolniky* must wear a lozenge of red cloth in a conspicuous place on their coats. He proposed to have high warp tapestry made in his States, but, as someone observed, they did not know how to spin cotton. He looked forward to digging a canal to join the Caspian and the Baltic while the works on Lake Ladoga were still dragging on and on unfinished. He required the installation of lamps in the streets, and set up a most complicated table of Ranks, thus with one stroke of the pen overturning the whole order of society.

Hereditary nobility was henceforth accorded to all officials holding a certain rank in the hierarchy, and all officers of the land and naval forces.

At last, in November 1723, an ukase was issued announcing the approaching coronation of Catherine.

After four years reflecting and considering, he seemed to regard no person more worthy to succeed him on the throne of All the Russias than the former servant of Pastor Gluck.

CHAPTER SIX

BANDS of brigands overran the country districts, killing travellers and holding them for ransom. Not long before, nine thousand robbers, a retired colonel at their head, had marched on Saint Petersburg with the declared intention of burning the Admiralty and the principal buildings. They were dispersed and thirty-six of them had been impaled. But other bands were formed.

For months the army had not been paid, nor the navy, nor the officials, nor anybody, in short. The lower classes were dying of starvation and publicly insulting the foreigners. In the streets of the capital people were trying to sell their children. Some ugly explosion was imminent.

What was Peter the Great doing, the Father of his Country?

On March 2, 1724, he let off a magnificent set-piece of fireworks with his own hands under the windows of the Empress on the anniversary of her marriage. It displayed their initials intertwined within a heart surrounded by emblems of love.

For his wife's coronation he had ordered a crown of prodigious richness; it weighed four pounds and had an enormous ruby at the peak. The goldsmith charged a million and a half of roubles for it. The robe, which cost four thousand roubles came from Paris, as well as the marvellous gilded coach in which Catherine was to drive away from the cathedral.

The day before the ceremony, when they brought him the embroidered coat he was to wear, the niggard in a sudden fit of wrath shook it furiously. Gold spangles and gold thread fell to the ground.

" Look, Katinka," he roared, " they'll be sweeping away all that, enough to pay a grenadier."

She smiled, and he calmed down again.

On March 18th, he placed the crown on the head of his wife

Peter the Great

kneeling before the altar. She wept and tried to embrace his knees. He prevented her very tenderly, raised her to her feet, and laid the globe in her hands, withholding only the sceptre, the emblem of power.

How he loves her! Now nothing seems to count in his eyes but Catherine and her daughters, Anne and Elizabeth, whom he called " thieves " the other day because they took up his time.

Otherwise he has no longer confidence in anyone. He has had to condemn Ostermann to death also, then reprieve him on the scaffold on which the diplomat appeared still clad in his eternal red dressing-gown. He will have to strip the incorrigible Menshikov, now dried up, yellow, lean, the regular Don Quixote of the illustrations, of his presidency of the College of War and several of his estates.

Now Peter retains no illusions about anyone but himself. Sick, exhausted, physically worn out, but from pride and obstinacy refusing to recognize it, he wishes to be in action once more.

He would like to recapture Azov; he orders fortresses and redoubts to be built on the frontiers of the Crimea, flat-bottomed boats at Voronezh. He has asked the ship's captain Behring to organize an Expedition for the year 1725 to discover if America is or is not joined to Tartary, in this taking up afresh an old idea of Liebnitz. And he intends also to establish himself in Madagascar. He has composed a very good letter to the King of the island, in which he explains to that monarch how much it would be to his advantage to have the protection and patronage of Russia, very much better since the Treaty of Nystadt, says Peter, than that of Sweden.

This undertaking was postponed, to his serious annoyance, for lack of ships capable of making the voyage. The fleet was,

as a matter of fact, in a very poor way. It was different in experience, and its manœuvring was pitiful. The seamen were worthless, and three-fourths of the officers were foreigners completely disgusted with this country of rogues.

Peter's other projects, the means of carrying out which diminished from day to day, were not less absurd. He dreamed of reconstructing the Colussus of Rhodes between Cronstadt and Kronslot. On top there would be a citadel, a lighthouse, and a platform from which fireworks could be let off. The foundations were begun immediately. He also wished to have an academy, which promised from the terms of his ukase to be the most burlesque and foolish thing in the world. In the whole empire there was as yet only one single secondary school, at Novgorod; all the same he invited Bernouilli, Hermann, and Delisle to come to his capital and there continue the development of their ideas on the higher mathematics and Greek and Roman antiquities. But to the end of his days he would never be aware that he had living beside him Possoshkov, the author of *Poverty and Riches,* a great thinker, who has deservedly been called the Montesquieu of Russia.

Peter's intelligence declined while his taste for debauchery and coarse pleasures intensified. " His Majesty," cries one of his physicians horrified by the progress of his mania, " must have a legion of the demons of lust in his body."

He had one of his aides-de-camp painted naked. He forced the senators to sit in their masks during the carnival. Matthew Golovin, an old man of eighty, refused to take part in a masquerade disguised as the devil. He ordered him to be stripped naked, and condemned him to sit like that, with a horned cap on his head, for an hour on the ice of the Neva. The wretched man died of it.

He could not take his after dinner siesta now anywhere but

in a boat. He maintained that he had been cured of an attack of fever by sleeping on a frigate. At night, followed by a train of drunkards, he sang obscene songs in the streets.

He felt lost the moment Catherine was not with him. During the summer, coming back from a visit to the fleet, he found the Palace deserted. He sent off his yacht to fetch his wife from the country. Let her be brought back at once. " When I went into my room," he wrote to her, " I wanted to run away on the spot. Everything is so empty without you."

Before long he had to take to his bed. His physicians, Blumentrost and Paulson, diagnosed an attack of gravel complicated with a venereal complaint that had been badly looked after. He suffered terrifically, passed a large stone; his thighs were covered with suppurating sores.

Directly he thought himself cured he got up, and in September was present at the launch of a ship. He proclaimed that he had never been better in health. He drank, gesticulated, talked and talked. Catherine came to fetch him.

" Time to come home, little father."

Meekly he went with her.

In October, quite incapable of understanding the seriousness of his condition, and closing his physicians' mouths with a hearty whack of his *doubina,* he set off for Lake Lagoda, went on horseback plunging through the frozen marshes, the better to see for himself the progress made with the canal works, and toiled with his hands in the forges of Olonetz. On the way back, near Lahta, he saw a boat aground. Without a moment's hesitation he jumped into the water and helped rescue the crew.

On November 2nd, he reached Saint Petersburg and took to bed, smitten with a fever. Two days later he was on his feet again.

The next day the Secret Chancery informed him that the Empress had a lover, William Mons.

This was one of the brothers of the former favourite, a handsome, brilliant young man whom he had received at court out of kindness of heart, from weakness, from stupidity, and treated very well. The supple puppy received thumping presents in return for his valuable interventions, for nobody in the whole city, except the Emperor, was ignorant of the intrigue.

Peter was far more thunderstruck than irate. Catherine, Catherine as well, was betraying him! For two weeks he remained stoically silent. One might imagine that wrath reanimated the disillusioned body from within.

On November 20th, after supper, having ended a very friendly and familiar talk with Mons, he suddenly asked his wife what time it was.

" Nine o'clock," she replied.

He tore the watch he had brought her from Dresden out of her hands, turned the hands sharply and cried:

" No, it isn't nine o'clock. It's midnight. Let everybody be off to bed! "

Ten minutes after William was arrested in his room. The young man was condemned to death for trafficking in bribes.

His Majesty then went to the prisoner's cell and ceremoniously told him how sorry he was to be parted from him. The other was wearing four rings: a gold ring, one of lead, one of iron, one of copper.

" This," asked the sovereign, putting a finger to the first one, " this one was for love, wasn't it? "

And he withdrew pleasantly, never in his life having been so polite and gallant.

On November 28th, Mons had his head cut off.

That very same day, Peter took Catherine out in a sledge, and made her drive in front of the scaffold. Her dress brushed against the dead man. She never even winced and went on smiling. That night the young man's head was placed on her mantelpiece in a jar filled with spirits of wine. She remained calm and unmoved. Her husband smashed a Venetian mirror in her presence with his fist, and said:

" I will do the same to you and yours."

She replied with complete impassiveness:

" You have just destroyed one of the ornaments of your own home; does that make it any more delightful? "

Catherine was too strong for him. And as on every occasion when he could not be victor, he took to flight. They no longer spoke to each other, nor dined together, nor slept together.

Every day he went to see Maria Cantemir. Who was the doctor who had attended her at Astrakhan? The Greek Palikala. He laughed; he had understood what that meant; the Empress had paid the rascal to eliminate the child.

She should not escape his vengeance. Peter meant it to be a terrible one.

Everybody knew that Catherine was lost. France was destined to save her. A discussion was always proceeding, without ever coming to any conclusion, about a treaty of alliance between the two powers and a possible marriage of Louis XV — no longer of the Duc de Chartres, as the Regent was dead — with Elizabeth. Campredon did not conceal from Tolstoy that these negotiations would fail if the prospective mother-in-law of the King of France was executed.

The diplomat communicated these words to the Emperor, who replied that he had other things to think of at that moment. He went that night to the conclave where a new Prince-Pope was to be elected. And that is where Peter spent

the two nights of Friday the 7th and Saturday the 8th of January.

A week later Catherine made a long and deep genuflection before her husband in the great drawing-room of the Winter Palace full of guests. The conversation that they entered upon after this went on for three hours. They had supper together but separated afterwards. Everyone had the impression that husband and wife had become reconciled.

Next day Peter took to his bed anew, and on the 23rd, on the advice of the Italian doctor, Lazarotti, who had been called in for a consultation, a tapping operation was carried out. The patient's condition appeared to be desperate.

" What a poor creature man is," muttered the dying man.

He asked to have Prokopovitch, the Bishop of Pskov brought to see him, and to have the prison doors thrown open.

The prelate confessed him, and the Emperor took the sacraments.

" I believe, I hope," he stammered with livid cheeks.

He confessed, and took the sacraments twice more, repeating with lips glued to the crucifix, the lying words:

" I believe, I hope."

A fortnight before he had been electing Buturlin's successor and kissing the Princess-Abbess's breasts.

The house of his last defeat found him as cowardly as he was at Narva and on the Pruth. He only thought of escaping the wrath of God.

Egoistical, always more the man than the sovereign, he forgot to appoint his successor. He showed no interest in the fate of the Empire.

On the 27th, at two o'clock, he asked for paper and a pencil. The fleshless hand traced these words: *" Give everything back*

to . . ." but he never finished this somewhat short will and testament.

Towards evening he sighed out " Anne! Anne! " His eldest daughter hurried to him. He gazed at her, dazed and speechless.

In a neighbouring room Menshikov, Tolstoy, and Buturlin were already sharing out the future among themselves, joined from time to time by Catherine, who quickly dried her tears on these occasions. They would swear in the Senate that the Emperor had chosen his wife to be his heir; they would cite the precedent of the coronation; they would shout: " Long live the Empress," they would fling roubles to the crowd. And the trick would succeed, so long as they were bold enough. Well then, they would be.

On January 28th, at six o'clock in the morning, Peter, who had been in the throes of death since the night before, breathed his last without uttering a word.

The Livonian servant-girl would ascend the throne. She breathed more easily. Everybody breathed more easily. What a deliverance.

Snow was falling on Saint Petersburg. The night was near to its end. The tearful widow swathed in great mourning veils had gone back to her own apartments. The light of the tall wax candles made white gleams in the black velvet hangings. The soldiers of the guard dozed as they stood round the long bier where now slept for ever he who in life had slept so little.

Suddenly there were dreadful cries " Peter Alexievitch, Peter Alexievitch, come back, come back!

Two drunken arms were waving in the empty air. It was the procurator-general Yagujinsky, the favourite of long ago, trying to awaken his master. He tore the funeral pall, and sitting astride of the coffin, beat on the oaken sides.

" Peter Alexievitch, come back, come back! "

Was there one soul then that regretted him? This must have been the only one.

" The cat is dead, the mice will bury him," said the folk in the street to one another.

Peter the Great's work lasted for barely two centuries. To-day nothing of it is left. But from the very outset was it not condemned in advance to perish?

" This premature fruit from a snow-covered hothouse will never come to ripeness " was already Mirabeau's prophecy about Russia.

Fifty years earlier, he who in history is known as Frederick the Great had delivered this just and implacable judgment on the Reformer:

" A combination of fortunate circumstances, of favouring events, and the ignorance of foreign countries, made the Czar into a heroic phantom whose greatness no one ever thought of questioning. A wise historian who was in some part a witness of his life, raises an indiscreet veil, and shows us that prince with all the defects of human-kind and few virtues. He is no longer that universal mind that conceives everything and desires to know the realities of all things; but he is a man governed by whims and fancies new enough to give a certain glamour and to dazzle the world; he is not the intrepid warrior who fears and knows no peril, but a coward prince, whose brutality leaves him in the hour of danger. Cruel in peace, weak in war, admired by foreigners, hated by his subjects; a man in short who carried despotism as far as a sovereign could, and to whom fortune and luck stood in the stead of wisdom: withal a great mechanic, hardworking, industrious and ready to sacrifice everything to his curiosity."

The best minds of the eighteenth century never took Peter's reforms very seriously, nor the monarch himself, with the exception of Voltaire, whose testimony has little value. He worked to order and on his own confession he manipulated a good many facts.

How many Russian writers have since copied his example!

Those apologists, ready for anything, were to see in the course of the nineteenth century a kind of intellectual party rising up in opposition to them. These were the Slavophils, indirect heirs of the first *raskolniky*. And a tremendous debate arose to settle whether Peter had been right or wrong to Europeanize his people.

The question seems to us today to be badly formulated because it takes this result as a thing actually accomplished. To accept its terms we have to carry our minds back to the period when it was first put forward. For who in those days would have dared or been able to maintain that Russia was not a European nation? It was European in so much that it extended its domination towards the West over territories that were not Russian.

It was by his victories and not by his ukases — and this is a point that has escaped almost everyone — that Peter Europeanized Muscovy. The change, much more apparent than real, was made at the expense of Europe. By seizing Swedish provinces, by showing his successors, through the fault of Augustus, the road to Warsaw, the founder of the Empire did a disservice to the civilization he perhaps thought he was serving. Europe did not annex Muscovy to itself, it was Muscovy that annexed a part of Europe, and without assimilating it.

On the day when the peoples she had subjugated broke away from Russia, on that very day Peter's reforms crumbled into nothing. Then it was perceived that in spite of its modern, European, mechanical equipment, the country, in its real internal structure, remained archaic and Asiatic.

Was this such a universal surprise? The Russian soul loves to call itself, with false modesty, incomprehensible. It never was incomprehensible until the moment when it divided itself between two cultures, one of which is non-existent. The Slavo-

phils are paying no heed to the truth when they assert, in the excess of their pride, that the civilization Peter endeavoured to impose on his subjects thwarted and warped the development of another and truly national civilization. This never existed save in the contemporary imagination of a few dreamers. What is real is that the lowest strata of the population have always had the nostalgia of their ancient barbarism.

The reforms, which in any case only influenced an élite of restricted numbers, did not succeed for that very reason and for another, somewhat akin to it, that belongs to the essential character of this race. The Russian soul is incapable of evolution. Its natural docility makes it apt to pretend to adopt any system whatever holus bolus, but without developing and without improving it, even though it should submit to that system for whole centuries. The idea of originality and the idea of progress are equally foreign to it. Thus the government of this country has always worn a double aspect of imitation and inertia.

The Russian army was in 1914 the only army in Europe each regiment of which was equipped, as under the ancient system, with its own artillery. And the fleet regulations still, as in the days of Peter, forbade the commander of a squadron to attack an enemy unless with forces four times greater.

If Russia was conquered during the Great War that saw all the armed forces of Europe confronting one another, it was not through her lack of organization and her proverbial slackness, it was above all through the shape of her mind.

She could be felt secretly as much opposed to her allies as to her enemies. How could she possibly be acting sincerely in defence of the principle of self-determination of peoples, she who was holding Poland, the Baltic provinces, and Finland in bondage? Was the triumph of Panslavism really more to be desired than the triumph of Pangermanism?

And this false position brought her to Brest-Litovsk. There she betrayed her own pledged word; there she threw over all her engagements; there she lost her conquests and her honour. But all that is nothing so very new for anyone who knows the history of the country.

This shameful treaty marked the end of Russia and the rebirth of Muscovy. Saint Petersburg falls into decay, Kiev, the mother of Russian cities, but civilized by the Poles, dreams of an independent Ukraine, and Moscow has become the capital once more. Europe ends now at resuscitated Poland. The work of Peter and those who continued it after him is wiped from the map. It is wiped from men's souls as well.

The Bolshevist revolution was, from one aspect, a national revolution. The moujik knows nothing of what Marxism stands for, but instinctively hating civilization, he has seen the reforms vanish with a muddled feeling of some not very clear kind of deliverance.

Lenin has conquered Peter the Great. The Slavophils are victorious. The Eurasia they boast of, is not Moscow trying to bring it into being? " The seed of Miloslavsky," the twice-dead Czar would say, " has sprouted one last time."

Muscovy has gone back to her natural native barbarism. Faithful to the eternal great dream of the old races of Asia, she is waiting in patience for the opportunity to hurl herself once more upon the Europe she hates.

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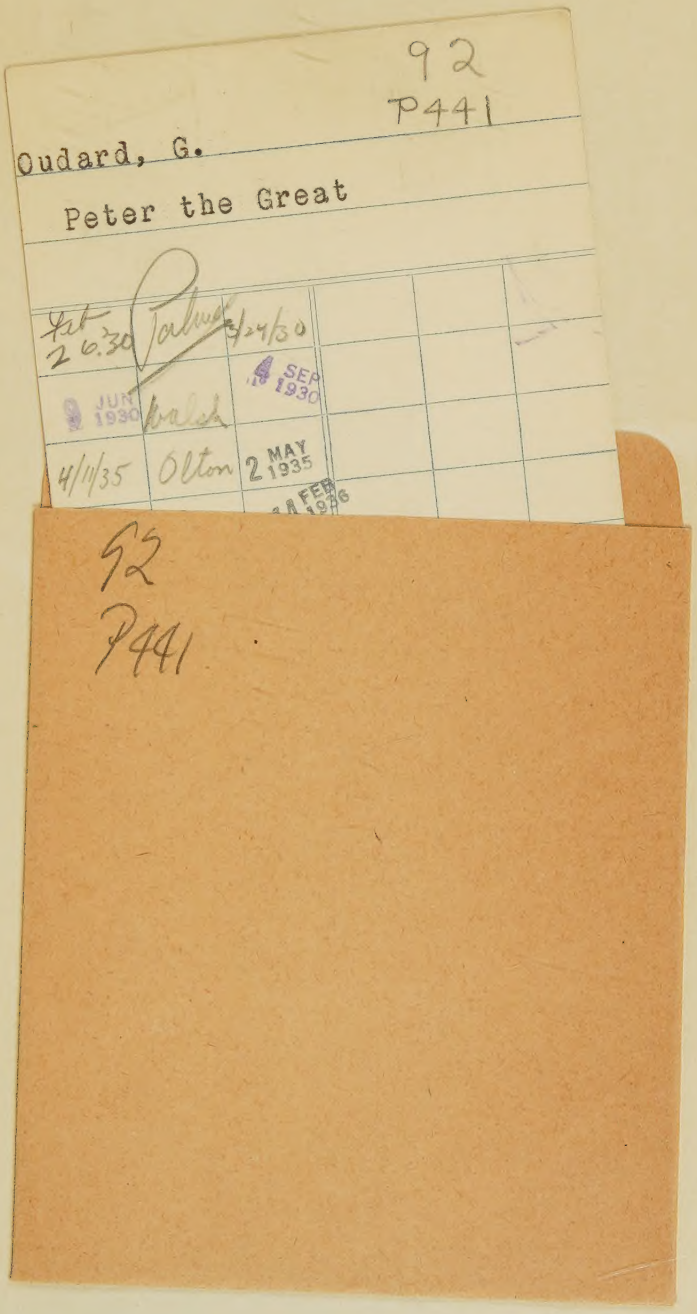

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Oudard, G.

Peter the Great

Feb 26.30	Palmer	3/24/30			
9 JUN 1930	Walsh	4 SEP 1930			
4/11/35	Olton	2 MAY 1935			
		18 FEB 1936			

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